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*James H. Rogers*

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# A KEYSTONE OF EMPIRE FRANCIS JOSEPH OF AUSTRIA

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BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE MARTYRDOM OF  
AN EMPRESS"

ILLUSTRATED

*Margaret Gunkel-Owen*



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TO HIS MAJESTY  
FRANCIS-JOSEPH, EMPEROR-KING OF AUSTRO-HUNGARY  
IN MEMORY OF FORMER DAYS

Remembering all the beauty of that star  
Which shone so close beside Thee that ye made  
One light together, but has past, and leaves  
The Crown a lonely splendor.



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A mighty Keystone shouldering up the span  
Of a gray arch of Empire, while below  
Threatens a torrent black and fierce of flow  
That ill-wrought masonry uncouth of plan.  
All strange, dissimilar stones the quarry can  
Yield, East or Southward, in a helpless row  
Let ponderously their great bulks inward go  
And lean upon it, bearing like a man.

Pray Heaven it hold! and when Time crumble it  
May naught unworthy take that high command  
But granite strengthened by the shock of seas.  
And thus true-centred, well and firmly knit  
Austria, by ages honored, still withstand  
The crush and turmoil of the centuries.



# A KEYSTONE OF EMPIRE

## CHAPTER I

THE great park was smiling with the new, clean-washed radiance of spring, under a velvety blue sky, seen through the tender foliage of veteran trees, stretching their mighty arms greedily towards the golden sun-rays.

On the mossy edge of a fountain stood a baby—rosy, chubby, golden-haired, and blue-eyed—peering intently into the transparent water, wherein the squat body of a big, green frog reposed comfortably upon a miniature boulder, his round, topaz eyes gleaming just above the surface.

Plainly the frog was sunk in a deep reverie, revolving in his round, flat head queer, mysterious water secrets, and regretful memories of long, lazy summer days spent amid the tangle of oozy weeds carpeting his native brook. Now, alas! he was old and cynical and heavy, contemptuously silent, and quite undisturbed by the gay little figure so perilously balanced on the slippery bastions of his splendid prison.

The baby, fascinated by the yellow, glittering eyes of the monster, extended a dimpled, pink-palmed hand, and, bending forward, tried to touch ever so gently the top of the shining, partly immersed head. Almost was the deed accomplished, almost had the little fingers

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caressed the imperturbable water-god, a soft, purling, victorious laugh thrilled the morning quiet; then came a splash, a cry of terror, and the future high and puissant Emperor of Austro-Hungary lay on his little round nose, at the bottom of the fountain!

The water-plants rocked with a violence hitherto quite unknown to those decorous, admirably tended growths, while scores of birds, with a loud whir of startled wings, rose from their twittering councils in the scented thickets hard by; finches, nightingales, robins, and even gray-clad, ubiquitous little sparrows raising alike shrill cries of amazement and alarm, and for a short moment the out-door world stood still as though time had ceased to be while the fate of a great empire, and that of a tiny, dimpled toddler, hung in the balance. Then the sound of hurried feet came down a shaded avenue, where the sun, glancing through dainty clouds of tender green, dappled the gravel-path with rosy spots, and a young gardener's assistant, attracted by the cries of the birds and moved by an inexplicable but overwhelming impulse, ran straight to where the white form of the little Archduke still feebly struggled among the lily-pads.

With a wildly beating heart, and a choking sensation in his throat, he snatched the half-drowned mite from the water, and ran at full speed towards the castle, where the careless attendants who had allowed the child to stray away had already given the alarm, for a knot of people were running excitedly down the marble steps of the upper terraces, and crying out confusedly to one another, as if almost distraught.

One tall, graceful figure, however, guided by an unerring mother-instinct, flew down the path taken by the young gardener and his precious burden, and Archduchess Sophia, with her beautiful hair streaming loose



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upon her shoulders, her face white and haggard, her trembling lips unable to form a word, stretched imploring arms towards the lad, her usual icy, proud composure completely shattered by overpowering anguish.

"He is not hurt, *Kaiserliche Hoheit*, not a bit the worse," he shouted joyfully, thrusting the boy into his mother's arms; and then, smitten with a sudden, paralyzing shyness, which made the blood tingle like fire through his veins, he turned on his heel and, without waiting for thanks or reward, ran off as fast as he could put foot to the ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 18th of August, 1830, a salute of one hundred and one guns had proclaimed to the good citizens of Vienna that yet another Prince had been born to the Imperial House of Habsburg. Later on the *Wiener Zeitung* published a bulletin of which the following is a literal translation:

"Her Imperial Highness Archduchess Sophia, wife of his Imperial Highness Archduke Franz-Karl, and daughter-in-law of his Imperial Majesty Francis I., has been happily delivered of a son at the Imperial Palace of Schönbrunn. Her Imperial Highness and the Imperial Babe are both in a satisfactory condition. The christening will take place to-morrow at the Palace of Schönbrunn, and will be followed by a *Cercle*."

The birth of this particular little Archduke was greeted with joy not only by the Emperor's loyal subjects, but by the entire House of Habsburg, for obvious reasons. To begin with, the then reigning Emperor, Francis I., had never been robust, for ever since the injuries received by him at the battle of Lugos, during the war with the Turks, to which he had in 1788 accompanied his uncle and predecessor Emperor Joseph, his chest had remained

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delicate, and it was always greatly feared lest any shock or overstrain of the nerves or the brain should precipitate him into the grave, leaving the throne vacant for his weak-minded and unpopular son Ferdinand, who had no issue, and was looked upon as a most undesirable successor to his kind-hearted and conscientious father. Nor were the people of Austro-Hungary, or, for the matter of that, the Imperial Family, very eager to see Ferdinand's younger brother, Archduke Franz-Karl, assume the reins of government should it become necessary to pass over the former, for, although the most upright and just of men, his tastes were far more quiet and domestic than political, and he was of so very kindly a disposition that his heart always overruled his head; not the best of recommendations for a monarch beneath whose sceptre a score of different races and peoples exist, creating and fomenting unceasing conflicts, which can alone be subdued by an iron hand in a velvet glove. It will, therefore, be readily understood that the necessity for a fit and proper heir to the heavy Dual Crown was bitterly felt, and hence the rejoicing occasioned by the birth of Francis-Joseph, who, none doubted, would be brought up in every particular as an Emperor should be by his mother, the shrewd, clever, and determined Archduchess Sophia; a *maîtresse femme* if ever there was one.

Myriads of roses were glowing upon the velvety lawns of Schönbrunn and the warm beams of summer sun danced on the tall jets of the fountains in the Pleasaunce, when the handsome, vigorous, Archducal baby was for the first time carried into open air. Beside the stately, Junoesque wet-nurse in her gorgeous Tyrolese costume, proudly bearing in her arms the white chrysalis from which an emperor would presently emerge, walked no less a personage than Francis I. himself, his pale, drawn

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face transfigured by a profound and all-engrossing tenderness—the sincerest, deepest, purest feeling of his whole existence—as he gazed through its soft, snowy lace veils at the small, pink visage of his grandson.

Day by day he accompanied the baby to the gardens, and thus in that lovely place and season began what was to become a very touching companionship between the weary, disappointed, deeply embittered sovereign and the tiny mite destined to inherit the crown which he himself had found so truly one of thorns.

The two were seldom far apart, and as soon as the child could walk he found no readier playfellow, no more patient attendant than his beloved *Grot*—a charming corruption of the as yet unpronounceable *Grossvater*—over whom he could tyrannize to his heart's content. Indeed, a disposition less sweet might have been totally ruined by such an adoring affection as that lavished upon him by the doting old man; but little “Franzi” was an exception to the general rule, and passed unscathed through the trying ordeal, despite his mother's gloomy prognostications. It was a touching sight to watch the spare, stooping figure of the monarch bend yet lower to put himself on the level of the child, or to see his stern blue eyes softening and smiling, and his usually knitted brows smooth themselves under his silver locks when the little one appeared on the scene.

The old Emperor was passionately fond of birds and flowers, and he initiated his little grandson at the earliest possible age into the mysteries of natural history and botany—not, however, the cruel, insensate sciences which prompt the student to tear apart the satiny petals of delicate blooms in order to dissect their tender hearts, or to pull to pieces the velvet wings of butterflies, and the emerald corselets of rose-beetles while they still live and flutter, or after they have been done to

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death with ammonia, ether, or—worse yet—with torturing pins that have fastened their poor little quivering bodies to corks for long days of agony. No! No! Francis I., whom historians, especially German ones, have not hesitated to accuse of utter heartlessness, harshness, craftiness, and a decided leaning towards refined cruelty, would not have hurt an insect or even a flower for any consideration.

His favorite playgrounds for his little grandson were in winter the magnificent winter-gardens, communicating with the private apartments at the Hofburg, and in summer the gorgeous parks and greenhouses of Schönbrunn and Laxenburg, where the quaintly assorted pair devoted many hours to floriculture. Often they would walk all alone and hand in hand under the grand elms and walnut-trees of the Imperial Park, watching wonderful nature—the pale primroses peeping through dark mosses, the turquoise wings of the blue-jays fluttering in the branches, the shy, brown squirrels swinging among the hazel-bushes, and the gold-fish, glowing like flames or animated jewels, everlastingly touring in the gigantic fountain-basin, where “Franzi” had nearly found his death. Indeed, this last was one of their greatest delights, and when the greedy swarm opened and shut their bland, cavernous mouths in catching crumbs, and swallowed them with a coldly contented flicker of their gold-rimmed eyes, the little boy’s laughter would ring out in ecstasy and be echoed by the low, repressed merriment of his much-pleased *Grot*.

Poor Archduchess Sophia! even her omnipotence stopped short of the power required to separate these two, although she employed her finest strategy and her cleverest plannings and plottings to that end, for she was greatly alarmed lest her beloved boy should escape from under her Spartan rule, and be over-indulged and

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encouraged to disobey her by that meek Autocrat, his Most Catholic Majesty, Francis I. But the bond between "Franzi" and his *Grot* proved unbreakable, and remained so until death closed the sad, tired eyes of the fond old grandfather, whom his subjects called the *People's Emperor*, because he was truly their spiritual father, in spite of all that the jaundiced works of Hor-mayr and others may say to the contrary.

Archduchess Sophia was at that time a beautiful woman, possessed of supreme distinction and of that dignity of bearing which is the appanage of ancient lineage and of long traditions of courtesy and culture. Her every gesture was harmonious and reposeful, and her cameo-like features bore a calm, proud, cold expression, denoting perfect self-reliance. In her character an inextinguishable thirst for power, a disposition to exercise too despotic a will and to show herself contemptuous of any dictates but her own, and a distinct leaning towards intolerance, were curiously blended with a strong sense of duty and responsibility that rendered her unsparing of herself and untiring in her numerous charities.

"Sophia," her father-in-law once said, "has it in her to be a second Maria-Theresa. She brooks no contradiction, no opposition of any kind. She is overbearing and autocratic; but even her faults are noble ones, and had I myself had a few such the country would have greatly benefited thereby!"

Indeed, the Archduchess would have been an ideal ruler for a realm so difficult to keep in order as Austro-Hungary, for she would have known without a peradventure how to repress and discourage all tendencies to revolt and rioting long ere the time when grave revolutionary outbreaks sapped the very foundations of the Empire.



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Her undeniable nobility of temper, her inexorable pride and stern clearness of judgment, clothed her in an unyielding armor, and she serenely pursued her way in life unhampered by any feminine weakness of mind or body, walking as it were in the gratifying conviction that she at least could do no wrong. That this conviction carried her too far at times is sufficiently known. It has often been said that she was unscrupulous. This she was not in any ordinary sense, and as for the political interpretation of the word, everybody knows that its extreme elasticity permits any historical scribbler to stretch it enough to cover offences against his own personal tastes and opinions. Indeed, there is no master of statecraft, no energetic and painstaking prime-minister, or for the matter of that no successful politician of whatsoever color or inclination, who has not been laid under this accusation.

A hard, cold, determined woman, if you will, was Archduchess Sophia, who would have been sufficiently remarkable in any age for her total lack of gentleness and softness, and was much more so in a time of vaporous, languorous femininities; a woman more likely to be feared and admired than loved even in her own immediate family; a woman capable of causing the greatest pain to those nearest to her, by her firm belief in the superiority of her own judgment, and her steady resolution to uphold it against any other; but a woman of a large and fine moral mould, in no way paltry or mean. Moreover, she was certainly neither the remorseless intrigante nor the Machiavellian schemer she has been represented to be.

Her excessive severity, fortunately for little "Franzi," was counter-balanced by the infinite tenderness and boundless leniency displayed towards him by the lad's Imperial grandfather, and was still further mitigated

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by the absolute adoration of the child's father, Archduke Franz-Karl.

The accepted opinion about this Prince will have it that he was a rather colorless, insignificant gentleman, solicitous only about his own comfort, decidedly selfish, and so remarkably eager to avoid any exertion, trouble, or fatigue that he allowed himself to pass for a total nonentity. This, as a matter of fact, is a very unfair and unjust portrayal of the generous, golden-hearted man who throughout a long life abhorred the very idea of giving pain to others. Moreover, his intense and bitterly criticised love of peace, and his much-derided dread of any sort of quarrel, were without a doubt engendered by the terror which filled his earliest recollections of those dreadful days in 1805 and 1807 when Napoleon drove the Imperial Family of Habsburg from their beloved city of Vienna—at the point of the sword, as one might say. From these troubled times of his childhood the winning sweetness of his ways also took its origin. Indeed, far from being self-centred or an egotist, he was most wonderfully unselfish, living entirely for his wife and children, and making it his continual occupation to render them happier than any mortals have a right to be in this sad world of ours.

He had in his nature not a trace of the cold, forbidding haughtiness which is popularly supposed to be one of the characteristics of Royal and Imperial personages, nor did he confuse dignity with that stiffness suggestive of "having swallowed a ramrod," as do, alas! but too frequently those to whom dignity is but a laboriously acquired attitude—a matter of mere pose. He was invariably courteous to high and low alike, but his reserve of manner was singularly impenetrable, and his mode of speech gave one the impression of a gentle and sustained indifference to all that did not touch his

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beloved ones. In short, he might have been summarized by that strangely pathetic appellation which so often calls forth the ridicule and merriment of the crowd—a dreamer.

With his little son, Archduke Franz-Karl, like his Imperial father, became the merest child, thoroughly happy with all a child's pleasure in a long day spent in the woods, a search after wild flowers or autumn berries, or in any other simple amusement pertaining to the Golden Age of Youth; and in these pursuits there was true companionship between them, for so far from having to descend to the child's level, as Emperor Francis had done, he did but follow the bent of his own spirit.

His love of nature was a part of himself, an inborn, Hellenic sympathy, which is something entirely different from the pose of the individual who thinks to do honor to his own cleverness by patronizingly commending the works of the Almighty; and different also from that of the botanizing fiend who, with his tin canister at his back and his pompous Latin jargon, depoetizes the very essence of nature's poetry.

Archduke Franz-Karl quietly enjoyed the beauty of the out-door world, feeling himself thoroughly akin to all that grew or moved in it, all that rejoiced in the sunshine and flavored of the soil, whether flower or beast or man. He was familiar with every mountain or forest blossom, and had the love begotten of knowledge and long acquaintance for all the furred and feathered life of the woodlands, as well as for the stalwart *Senner* and *Sennerinnen* of his favorite summer retreats in Upper Austria and Tyrol.

One day as little "Franzi"—then a boy nearly five years old—was wandering with his father under the budding trees of the park at Schönbrunn, the child, spying in the young grass the first tuft of violets, de-



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lightedly fell on his knees, and, kissing the flowers gleefully, exclaimed, in his pretty, uncertain German:

"*Willkommen, Ihr hübsche, Ihr süsse! Gott segne euch!*" (Welcome, you pretty, you sweet! God bless you!)

A sound of contemptuous laughter came from the neighboring shrubbery, and Archduchess Sophia, twirling a rose-lined sunshade on her shoulder, pushed aside the supple boughs of a copper-beech, and stood before them.

"You ridiculous child!" she exclaimed, with some impatience. "A fine thing for a future soldier to fraternize with budding violets!"

Crimson with shame, the bonny little lad jumped to his feet, and gazed at the tiny, nodding blossoms through fast-gathering tears.

"*Weine nicht, Herzchen!*" said his father, bending caressingly over him, "*Mutzerl meint es doch nicht!*"

An ominous frown contracted the Archduchess's delicately pencilled brows, and her lips parted for further reproof, but closed immediately, her better nature gaining the upper hand. Stooping quickly she lifted the child from the ground, and drawing his curly head upon her shoulder, she soothed him with that graceful tenderness to which she, unfortunately, but infrequently gave expression, and which transformed her ordinarily impassive face as a bright sun-ray transforms a clear and colorless ice-crystal into a thing of transcendent beauty.

A scene from a story-book, say you? Not so! An incident that actually occurred.

It is a very thankless task, a weary undertaking, to tell the true history of a romantic life. For there are many who invariably conclude that one is disregarding truth for effect—which is humiliating indeed; and

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therefore too often, alas! the scribe—like the artist who does not dare, when setting his palette, to approach the gorgeous coloring of nature, the dazzling gold of an Oriental sunset, or the flaming hues of tropical blossoms—hesitates to relate the real, the live, the palpitating, or even the mere simple touching incidents which go to make up the existences of royal personages past or present.

At ten years of age Francis-Joseph was a handsome boy, fair of skin and slender of form, though very strong and supple from living much out-of-doors. His bright amber hair curled on his low, broad forehead, and his eyes were big, honest, fearless, and of the exact hue of a forget-me-not. He was tall for his age, and possessed to a supreme degree that air of refinement and distinction for which his mother was remarkable, and which, as I have already said, though not always the result of a patrician ancestry, is, however, rarely derived from any other source. Full of high spirits, there was something charming and contagious in his frank gayety, which was quite devoid of boisterousness, and rarely made him forget, despite a quick and impulsive temper, that an absolute and chivalrous courtesy is the first duty of a prince. Somehow or other he never worried anybody, as he was neither wayward nor imperious, but so considerate that his attendants were loud in his praise, and though by no means that horror of horrors, a model child, he had a knack of endearing himself at once and forever to those who had the fortune of meeting him intimately.

Of course, in spite of all this, he thoroughly well knew that he was a little man of considerable importance, to whom everybody rendered homage, and whose tiny hand was kissed by gray-haired Ministers of State and great nobles; but adulation had no bad effect upon him, thanks to his affectionate, sensitive nature, and his

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almost alarming swiftness in self-reproach and self-discontent, if I may use such a word.

Sports of all kinds delighted him. At eight years of age he rode his pony with consummate grace and skill, swam like an otter, was a sure and well-drilled shot at the target or running mark, and could use crampons and alpenstock with the same felicity as any mountaineer of his own beloved Tyrol.

In the Tyrol it was that from his earliest childhood he found his greatest joys; for long since his grandfather's and his father's love of nature had appeared in him. "A dreamer of dreams," his mother—who could never appreciate this side of his character—called him, and so, indeed, he may be said to have remained his life long—not in the sense of an indolent idealist, for none have worked harder nor more conscientiously than he, but in that of a temperament keenly alive to the beautiful in every form, satisfied with simple amusements, and incapable of *ennui* when thrown upon its own resources. Then as now he was ready to fly back to the tall hills and lofty peaks which he loved so dearly, and there, surrounded by the precipices black with pine and fir shelving dizzily downward, and wrapped about by the utter silence of the high ranges—broken only by the ripple of water or the distant tinkle and rustle of avalanches on the upper snows—drink deep draughts of solitude and delicious loneliness.

It was but natural that this little lad, drawn as he was so irresistibly to the romantic and the ideal, should love to wander in the winter twilight through the great panelled and tapestried galleries of the Hofburg, in order to watch the gleam of the rising moon filter through long, lancet windows painted by Jacob of Ulm and Selier of Landshut in the days of long ago, or to gaze dreamily at the grim figures in full armor keeping

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their rigid and eternal vigil under the gorgeous, gold-broidered banners adorning the walls in the *Rittersaal*.

Natural, also, though prophetically strange, that he should be devoted to the worship of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, that gracious and poetic figure which after so many centuries was to find reincarnation in the woman to whom, "*malgré tout ce que l'on peut dire*," the years of his manhood gave so deep and true a tenderness, the only woman, indeed, he really has loved as love should be loved.

A picture representing the noble wife of Louis of Hesse with the miraculous roses in her lap was one of the most cherished possessions of his childhood, and to this day it hangs above the narrow camp-bed which he invariably uses.

Yet through the tissue of all his winning and lovable qualities, his softness of heart and tender, affectionate nature, ran the strong strain of his maternal inheritance, like a clear breath of mountain wind through the sweet fragrance of flowers. This showed itself especially in his total lack of self-consciousness, in his honesty of purpose, and the brave, quiet determination that marked him as one who in after-times should be of those who may be broken but never defeated, and who amid misfortunes may say with the poet:

"Beneath the bludgeonings of Chance  
My head is bloody, but not bowed."

His extreme consideration for others and great generosity became apparent almost simultaneously with his acquisition of speech, and the following little anecdote may illustrate what I mean:

One day when he was not yet quite four years old he had followed his grandfather into the great tapestried hall where State papers were daily brought for the

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Imperial signature. Even at that time the child was in harmony with his royal surroundings, as he pattered about with the golden light of the sun falling through the painted panes of the immense windows upon his curly pate, his round, rosy face, big blue eyes, and the dove-hued velvets and laces of his little frock. The tiny feet were noiseless on the thick, purple carpet, and he trotted around, joyful and unhindered, stopping from time to time to examine the priceless vases, groups of bronze figures, and exquisite statues standing here and there upon tables and consoles. Suddenly in the deep embrasure of one of the windows he discovered the sword of the *General-Adjudant* on duty. Fascinated by the shimmering tassels of the *porte-épée* and by the possibilities of so novel a plaything, he pounced upon it, bestrode the sword, seized the golden cords and tassels in his chubby hands, and, using them as reins, began to gallop up and down, clapping his pink tongue energetically to encourage his charger. The Emperor silently indicated the boy's characteristic performance to his companion, and a wistful look came into his eyes, for he realized perchance that this delicious period of babyhood was almost at an end—always a sorrow for those who really love their children.

With a sudden impulse of the joy and mastery of possession, "Franzi" gave his mount a decidedly vicious jerk, which tore apart the delicately wrought *porte-épée* and caused the great sword to fall at his feet with a terrifying rattle of steel. Consternation depicted on his little face, where the color had suddenly deepened, and big tears gathering in his "forget-me-not" eyes, he stood transfixed and completely overcome by the magnitude of his crime. For a moment he remained thus; then the two men, watching him covertly, saw him slowly pick up the dismantled sabre and drag it to where its inwardly



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much-entertained owner stood at the Emperor's elbow. Up went the dimpled hands bearing their heavy burden, and from the piteously trembling lips came this astonishing and consoling sentence:

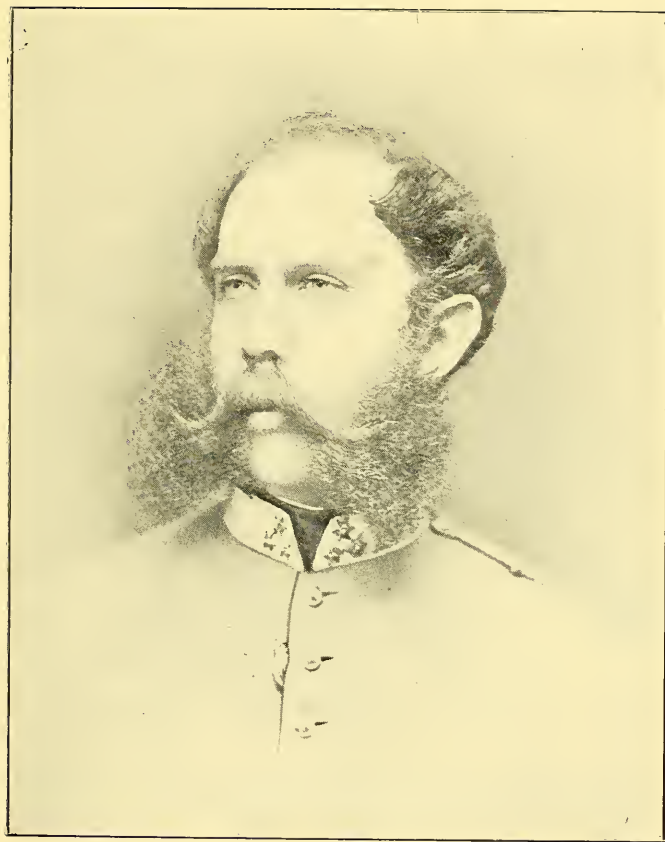
*"Weine nicht! Franzi wird's bezahlen wann er einmal Kaiser ist!"* (Don't cry! "Franzi" will pay for it when he is Emperor!)

"Franzi's" intercourse with his brothers was not as free as is usually the case when there is but a trifling difference of age. This was due to the fact that his education was directed entirely by his mother and on wholly different lines from theirs, which the father had now taken completely under his own charge. Of course during the summer months the boys romped together a good deal, but as soon as the Imperial Family returned to Vienna, or even Schönbrunn, the curious estrangement, separating them as virtually as if they lived miles apart, was resumed.

The brother he loved best was Ferdinand-Maximilian, who, only two years younger than himself, was best fitted to be his companion, and from the moment when the child had begun to walk "Franzi," when he was allowed to be with him, had been careful of his every step, jealous of his affection, and had tended him with untiring tenderness, risking, indeed, more than once, life and limb to bring him down from the mountains some coveted flower or bit of tinted quartz.

Little Ferdinand was a quaint child if ever there was one, and of a serious, mild, yielding disposition, which, alas! was to prove his undoing in later years, when, to satisfy the mad ambition of his Belgian wife, he accepted the crown and sceptre of Mexico.

Karl-Ludwig, who was a year younger than Ferdinand, was not, like him, gentle and quiet, but singularly opinionated, masterful, and eager to get his own way in



Erzherzog Carl Ludwig





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everything; "a proud, rebellious child," as his mother would say. He never, however, had "Franzi's" daring and skill in sports, and from the first he did not have what one calls *un caractère facile*. Years and education failed to change him, but only "combed his hide" and gave him a silken coat of dignity and self-command which sufficed at most times to conceal much roughness and narrowness of mind. Moreover, he was very single-minded in all he did and thought. He was pleased or displeased with people and with things, recognized no half-tints or half-measures, and was equally ready to give his life up for his friends and to consign his enemies to the tortures of the pit. A passionate, fiery soul under a rough bark—that was Karl-Ludwig!

As to Louis-Victor, the youngest of the brood, he was as yet but a baby, with light yellow curls, big round blue eyes, and a skin like a pink lily, and he did not enter into "Franzi's" life excepting in the rôle of an animated doll, with which he was occasionally allowed to play. Moreover, this littlest one of all was the darling and favorite of his aunt Empress Maria-Anna, who monopolized him and dreaded to see his brothers romp with the delicate, often ailing, child.

Poor Empress! her life was a colorless one, without great joys or deep sorrows, but unspeakably dreary in its childless monotony. Delicate and fragile, she took no pleasures in the sports so dear to all Austrian women, while her Italian heart unceasingly mourned the Court of her father, King Victor Emanuel of Sardinia, where she had lived in a warm and sensuous atmosphere, fragrant with flowers and enlivened by witty gossip. To her the feudal etiquette of the Hofburg, and the long northern winters seemed alike very terrible, and she only breathed entirely at ease when

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surrounded exclusively by Italians and priests, which marked preference naturally caused her to be extremely unpopular and freely accused of bigotry, and of wielding a very deleterious influence over her Imperial husband.

Little Louis-Victor was a veritable godsend to her, and this one sincere affection was the only really luminous spot in an existence spent in alternately eating bonbons and telling the beads of her rosary. "Franzi" she did not greatly like, for she was absolutely unable to comprehend his daring, his intrepidity, his love for open-air pastimes or his delight in those long, white-frozen months which she so greatly hated and contemptuously called "hyperborean!" "Franzi," she used to say, "is too full of vitality; it is fatiguing to watch him!" And when Archduchess Sophia left Vienna for the summer months the Empress's only regret was that this Spartan mother should decline to leave "Baby Victor" with his doting aunt, who spoiled him as it was, a great deal too much for her taste.

The best time of the year for "Franzi" and his brothers was just those summers spent at Weissenbach on the Attersee in Upper Austria, one of the most beautiful spots of that surpassingly lovely lake and mountain region. The divinely blue sheet of water, closed in from the world by an amphitheatre of pine-clad slopes, sweeping down from the eternal snows, was to the boys a constant source of delight, whether they canoed upon its gleaming surface, or frolicked and swam in its clean depths as soon as the snow-fed waters were sufficiently sun-warmed to allow of such a sport.

In this neighborhood "Franzi's" greatest friend was the now almost historically celebrated Doppelbauer, rector of Steinbach, a blunt individual, who prided himself upon speaking "*wie ihm der Schnabel gewachsen war*";

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that is to say, "just as his beak grew," or, in other words, very much to the point, and in a remarkably unconventional manner.

A character was this old man, whose clever, humorous, wrinkled countenance constantly beamed with good-humor. Of peasant birth, a son of the soil in heart, soul, and body, he lacked neither shrewdness nor a certain amount of learning; but a contented spirit, and a great love for his own place and surroundings, led him to seek no advancement or favor from the Church he so faithfully served. His very humble parsonage was to him a paradise, a daily cause for self-congratulation that he had resisted all such temptations, and his flowers, his orchard, his bee-hives, his poultry, and his splendidly fat, loudly grunting pigs were second only in interest to his parishioners.

He had already lived a long and blameless life of true devotion and some hardship, entailed by the prosecution of his labors in his rough mountain parish, when the little Archduke appeared to brighten his lonely and forcedly rather monotonous existence, and the extremely affectionate relations soon established between the slight, elegant Imperial child and the rubicund old priest were delightful to witness. The merry, sympathetic boy was a rare and enchanting companion to Doppelbauer, among whose virtues toadyism had no place, who was totally regardless of Court etiquette, and far from feeling that awe of his future sovereign which might have been expected of a man of his humble origin and simple life. Indeed, he treated the child "*tout à fait de puissance à puissance*," and with the freedom, ease, and *sans gêne* of a grandfatherly playfellow, loving him with all the strength of a great simple heart.

Early one morning, in the summer of 1840, "Franzi" took his way towards his reverend friend's modest abode,

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accompanied only by his favorite dog, a huge, mouse-colored Dane, whose big, gold-pailleted eyes were constantly fixed on his young master, and whose erect ears testified to his watchfulness and to his sincere and earnest consciousness of the responsibility resting upon him as the boy's trusty guardian. The walk to the parsonage lay under the cathedral gloom of Siberian pines along abrupt slopes carpeted by deep, soft, velvety mosses, and thick fern-brakes, and here and there a narrow brook made itself heard as it tumbled through the dim greenness to fall in foaming cascades into the Attersee far below.

In the priest's garden there was a loud hum of bees about the old-fashioned stocks, gillyflowers, hollyhocks, and snap-dragon surrounding great patches of sturdy cabbages, salads, and pungent onions, while, in a blossoming elderberry-bush by the trim fence, a goldfinch sang at the top of his harmonious little voice.

"Franzi," pausing at the wicket just long enough to explain to the dog that his size and his big paws would endanger the "Herr Pfarrer's" fine flowers and vegetables, and to console the disappointed attendant with a kiss on his beseeching nose, ran into the garden with a face of sunshine.

In a far corner of the enclosure Doppelbauer was kneeling amid his potatoes, weeding and tending the promising plants, and truth compels me to add that the reverend gentleman was excessively grimy, his large, sunburned hands bearing ample testimony to his labor amid the rich mould wherein the tubers throve.

"Ho, ho! Is that you, little friend?" he exclaimed, turning a crimson and perspiring but beaming countenance towards his visitor. "What good wind blew you here?" Then he added, with a laugh, "I can't shake hands with you, I'm too dirty."

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"That's nothing," exclaimed "Franzi," extending his smooth, pink palm; but, seeing that his beloved "Pfarrer" refused to grasp it, a shade of annoyance clouded his bonny visage, and with a little frown he stooped quickly, thrust his hand deep into the dark, greasy earth, and, withdrawing it thoroughly coated with mire, waved it triumphantly under the nose of his amazed and delighted host.

"Now," he cried with a laugh, "I'm just as dirty as you are, and you will have to shake hands!" Which ceremony was accordingly performed with much enthusiasm and merriment on both sides.

They were still chatting to their heart's content about the fowls and the fruit, the new-laid eggs — which the young Archduke loved to bring from the nests—and the tiny green flies threatening the rose-bushes, when they were suddenly warned by the mid-day bell of the Kaiser-villa chiming and clanging in the distance, how long a road, comparatively speaking, lay between the lad and his *déjeuner*. Also, an errand intrusted to him by his mother, but which had, until that moment, entirely escaped his memory, was recalled to "Franzi's" mind, and he said, coaxingly:

"'Herr Pfarrer,' mamma told me to ask you if you will dine with us to-night?"

Gravely Doppelbauer shook his large, shaggy head, wiped his hands upon his blue gardening-apron, and extracting a "rat-tail" snuff-box from the big, front pocket thereof, inhaled a generous pinch of "sneezing-powder," as "Franzi" called it.

"Won't you come?" the boy asked again, wistfully.

"Atch—chew!" sneezed the priest. "Atch—chew!" and, after blowing his nose vigorously in a gorgeous red-and-yellow handkerchief, he answered, roundly:

"No, my boy, I won't come. I've got two fine sau-



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sages and some right '*schmeckhaft*' (tasty) sauerkraut for my supper, and that's much better than the messes cooked by your grand chef; they do not agree with me at all. But you can tell your good mother that I'll come in for dessert. Your coffee is pretty fair, but for the rest—pfui!" Which peroration was emphasized by a grimace of the most realistic disgust.

Somewhat disappointed, but smiling to himself at the thought of what mamma would say to such a very unsophisticated mode of declining an invitation, the little Archduke turned his face homeward, racing down through the pine wood which slopes abruptly towards the flowery lawns of the "Schloss."

Damp and dishevelled from short-cuts through tangled undergrowth, he burst into his mother's morning-room:

"*Der Herr Pfarrer*," he panted, "will come after dinner. He does not like the cooking here, but he says the coffee is good, and, do you know, *Mutterl*, I think he is quite right."

As usual, when alone with her boy, the Archduchess thawed, and her grave eyes sparkled with genuine fun. "The '*Herr Pfarrer*,'" she remarked, dryly, "is quite a connoisseur, and so are you, no doubt! But go now and change your damp shoes, *Bubi*. Also, do not bring this elephantine dog in here. He capsizes everything with his interminable tail."

When at Weissenbach, I may state here, Archduchess Sophia was inclined to relax somewhat the severity of her Spartan rule, and her younger children felt that there they were far less outside her life. In Vienna, although never unjust, impatient, or unkind to them, yet her stern stateliness awed them, and when she attended to any of their demands upon her they knew by instinct that her whole heart was not in this accomplishment of maternal duty; so, very gradually, a slight and for a

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long time almost imperceptible jealousy of their elder brother crept into their hearts, from whence it was never eradicated.

The mother, whose hand caressed "Franzi's" golden curls, whose lips curved into a welcoming smile when he came into the room, who listened with exemplary patience to his stammering Latin, and praised his still unformed handwriting, seemed to them a distant goddess, proud and inflexible, who often rebuked them with peremptory and unyielding decision—not as she did to him, a dear *Mutterl* or *Mutzerl*, in whose very strictness the thoughtful boy had already perceived the best evidence of love. Of a truth, "Franzi" alone aroused in his mother those softer moods which suited her so well. She who, although a pious daughter of Rome, would have bearded the Holy Father himself, and braved the very thunders of excommunication when her indomitable spirit was roused, who would bend her will to none, who for days on end when offended intrenched herself in silence and pride, and who was accustomed to twist human volition like a willow wand in her hand, had never willingly had a harsh look for her first-born, from the moment when, in his babyhood, she had soothed and caressed and amused him, and watched him falling asleep on her lap with his downy head nestled upon her breast. He was, indeed, her all, and when, peradventure, an impatient word escaped her, it was followed by a throb of intolerable remorse.

There was yet another who escaped the half-terrified awe which the Archduchess inspired in most persons, and whom she greatly respected for it, strange as it may appear. This was the Reverend Doppelbauer.

The excellent old priest arrived that evening in time to swallow, with an appreciative smacking of the lips, a cup of the "pretty fair" coffee he had so condescendingly

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commended earlier in the day. After draining the last drop, however, he looked pityingly at the tiny Sèvres toy in which it had been served, and, shrugging his heavy shoulders, remarked:

"Now, what nonsense it is to use such thimbles! I've got a pint bowl at home that's something like; but this doesn't even hold enough to tickle the tongue!"

They were quite *en famille* on the terrace overlooking the lake; there was the tinkle of coffee-cups, the smell of cigar-smoke mingling with that of great beds of reseda and heliotrope. Clinging to the wall of the villa behind them, two immense climbing roses were all aglow with crimson and yellow blossoms, and in the distance the ramparts and bastions and high pinnacles of the mountains glittered under the slanting rays of the setting sun.

Archduke Franz-Karl, stretched peacefully in a long, cane chair, dandled his youngest son on his knee, and watching the lithe figure of "Franzi," as the boy ran down the steps towards the lake, saw, perchance, in his mind's eye, his grandchildren reigning here when he himself would be ever so old, and when "Franzi" would have long been a puissant monarch. Doppelbauer, sitting by the open glass door of the now empty dining-room, blinked into his cup with ludicrous disappointment, and repeated, ruefully:

"Ah, yes; hardly enough to tickle the tongue!"

Archduchess Sophia walked across to him with a full cup in her hand. She was dressed in white, and pearls—these unassuming gems of demi-toilette—were wound round her throat; her beautiful hair was very simply but very perfectly arranged, and she was smiling gayly.

"Come 'Herr Pfarrer'!" she said, indulgently. "I am going to prevent you from committing the sin of covetousness, at least for the present. Drink this, and when you want some more, I'll fill it again for you."



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Oh, good Doppelbauer, did you at this instant realize that a daughter and mother of kings was waiting upon you? It did not seem so, for, with a hearty laugh, of the quality which the French so graphically describe as *un rire gras*, he coolly exchanged cups, and allowed the greatly entertained Archduchess to carry away the empty "thimble" of precious china, calling after her, cheerily:

"Ha, Imperial Highness, all I ever covet are eatables! That's only half a sin."

She laughed too, and sat down on a low, cushioned chair to watch the glorious harvest - moon rise above the mountains. At her feet lay the great, glancing sheet of water, and the wonderful evening light seemed to have a voice that blended with the silvery tones of the church-bell ringing the "Angelus" behind the pine-crested slopes of a high hill on the left. The scene was strangely poetical, the lovely night aimed at an atmosphere of tenderness, of almost reverent romance, and with it mingled, ethereal and mysteriously pathetic, the sweet scent of nature in night's silent hours.

Suddenly, on the swiftly brightening luminous path made by Dame Luna upon the bosom of the lake, a tiny canoe, rocking violently, appeared. In it stood, paddle in hand, the venturesome "Franzi," swinging recklessly from side to side, and evidently enchanted with the illusion of being tempest-tossed which he was producing for himself.

Archduchess Sophia rose to her feet with a blanched, frightened face.

"Oh, 'Herr Pfarrer,' please shout to 'Franzi' not to do that!" she exclaimed, evidently relying on the old man's superior power of lung.

He lazily turned his bullet head, glanced at the little boat madly rolling about, watched for a minute the

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supple inclinations from right to left of the graceful figure poised perilously on its narrow thwarts, and responded, in broad patois:

“*Ach! Wenn er amal Kaiser is, wird no mehr über eahm komma, an wanner jetzt einfällt zarrn ma’n scho’aussa.*” (When he is once Emperor nothing will touch him more, and if he now falls in we can easily get him out.)

Alas for the worthy priest’s prophecy! How many were the things hidden in the future, that were to touch, and touch bitterly and keenly, the boy rocking so happily in the canoe!

In the charming gardens of the “Kaiservilla” at Weissenbach was a *kiosque* overlooking the lake, a small, low building made of carved, fretted, and fragrant red pine, surmounted by a pointed, thatched roof overrun with jasmine and roses. Long locks of mauve and white wistaria tumbled down its sides, heavy with the weight of bloom they supported, and rustled odorously in the light summer wind, or humbly drooped their glittering, tearful petals when one of the dense showers, which are the rule rather than the exception in those regions, came to freshen the earth. It was reached by winding paths curving between tall syringa, laburnum, lilac, and rhododendron bushes, and was a place always abounding in three beautiful things—silence, flowers, and perfume.

Here it was that every morning “Franzi” sat at his lessons with one or other of his instructors. There were not many sights or sounds without to distract his attention save the ripple of the blue lake, faint bird-songs among the shadows of the gardens, a shepherd seen on the opposite mountain’s flank driving his flock before him, and perhaps yodling melodiously to the drowsy echoes, or a peasant woman returning to her chalet with

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a gigantic bundle of fresh-cut grass poised upon her shapely head. The task done, all that paradise was his to range, but still to him the hours of study were not a time of penance, and he willingly bent his curly pate above ponderous tomes and absorbing exercises.

At the Hofburg his "school-room" was not so poetical, and yet Archduchess Sophia, who believed, and rightly so, that a child's artistic taste and comprehension should be developed by his surroundings as early as possible, invariably devoted to this use, not as is generally the case even for little Royal boys and girls, a plainly, nay, an oft meagrely furnished room, with glaring maps in lieu of mural decoration, and ink-stained tables supporting ill-bound volumes of the most discouraging aspect, but a room panelled and ceiled with oak, carved in dead-and-gone days by Schuferstein. Two great tapestries of Marc de Comans faced the Imperial boy's writing-table, which itself was a masterpiece of Buhl, and the atmosphere was kept warm and mellow by a brilliant fire of cedar logs burning day and night in a monumental polychrome stove of fifteenth-century make, with beautifully tinted tiled steps guarded by two wolves exquisitely carved in green bronze. Also there were always vases filled with hot-house blossoms on the centre-table—the only touch of femininity about this stately apartment which people enamored of French gilding, gay hangings, and plush-covered furniture would assuredly have criticised as somewhat too severe in style for a child's study.

The Imperial boy from the very first loved his lessons in history, his eyes shining like stars when he heard of some grand deed, some heroic action. Rudolph von Habsburg and Wallenstein were among his favorite historical characters—soldiers being always foremost in his esteem—and he could have listened to the records of their

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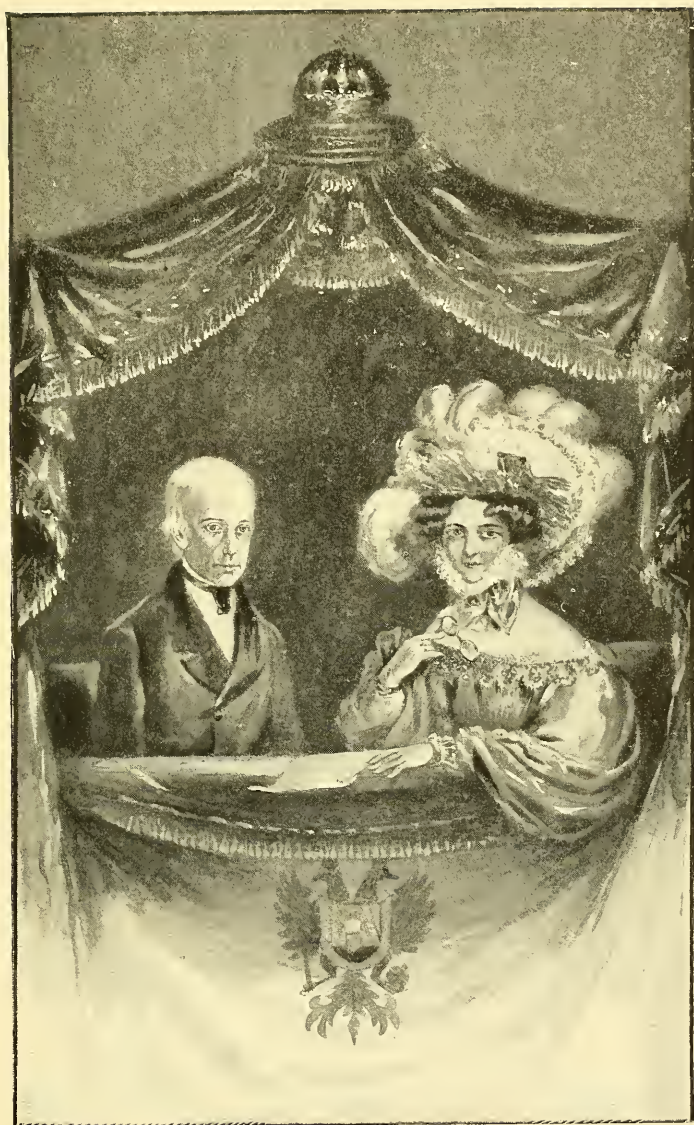
magnificent bravery from "Matins" to "Ave-Maria" during the long winter days when the snow fell with gentle pertinacity upon the grim, gray courts of the "Burg," or the wind howled around its thick, granite walls in a fitting accompaniment to the recital of these Homeric combats.

Thus was passed a singularly happy and peaceful childhood, under the wisest of regimens, with simple fare, and an almost total absence of the amusements we are accustomed to associate with the life of the great of this world, but beautified instead by harmless pastimes and out-door sports and occupations amid the pure Alpine air. Surrounded, during six months out of every twelve, by scenes so germane to his sunny nature, and forming so fitting a background to the gay dreams of a lively boyish fancy, the little Archduke grew towards maturity sound in body, soul, and brain.

When Archduke Franz attained his twelfth year, his mother decided that his baby name of "Franzi" should now be dropped and replaced by "Franz," *tout court*, as an indication that he had left childhood behind him and had entered adolescence. From that day on, too, she had her younger children brought to her more often, drove out with them occasionally, inquired into their studies, their amusements, their pastimes, their comforts, habits, and even their playthings, and, wonder of wonders, now and again at the twilight hour they were allowed to sit at her feet, playing, or listening to the legends and stories which she excelled in telling. But, nevertheless, her pride and her hopes dwelt as ever in her fair-haired first-born, whom she already saw bearing the weight and glory of the Dual Crown.

In spite of her stoicism, however, she, like any other loving mother, suffered acutely from this change, and notwithstanding her eagerness to urge on by all possible





EMPEROR FRANCIS I. (GRANDFATHER OF FRANCIS-JOSEPH)  
AND EMPRESS CAROLINE IN THE IMPERIAL  
BOX AT THE THEATRE



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means the moment when the lad she was so proud of should reach full manhood, and therefore be ready to ascend the steps of the throne, yet she felt deeply, almost cruelly, regretful of the days when he had been all her own, her little, curly-headed darling, coming to be consoled for small troubles and small pains within the shelter of her arms.

When Emperor Francis had died in 1835 she had breathed a sigh of relief, for she had always dreaded what she called his "effeminating influence" upon his favorite grandson; and when watching the child's almost abnormal grief at that moment, when hearing him sobbing aloud almost deliriously, jealous thoughts, which, like rust upon iron, had eaten deeply into her heart, nearly overcame her, and she had had to strive not to treat the child she adored with positive harshness in her impatience at witnessing how great must have been the love between those two.

Poor Emperor Francis! He was sincerely mourned by his subjects far and wide, and the feathers taken from the pillow upon which he breathed his last, and which had very characteristically been distributed to the ladies of the aristocracy, are still found in many a patrician household exquisitely framed and sacred as were they relics; but his daughter-in-law kept no such memento, for had he not been a dangerous stumbling-block in her path? After all, she was inclined to think, everything happens for the best in this uncertain and changeful world of ours, even the accession of her timid, weak, delicate brother-in-law, Ferdinand, whom at heart she despised, for he would at least make a wonderful foil for the Emperor she was fashioning, as a great sculptor fashions the clay of a future *chef-d'œuvre*.

Her Franz! The greatness of his race, the greatness of his future, were wellnigh sacred things to her, and far

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dearer than her own pride. She never tired of telling him of his obligations and privileges, pointing out to him his proud descent, like a dazzling line of light streaming down to him through the darkness of the ages to guide his footsteps. All ordinary emotion of maternity, all softening recollections of her own childhood, were nearly killed in her by her consciousness that it was she, and she alone, who was predestined to be the mentor of this King, and that her hands might mould, her spirit create, that superb and dazzling creature of her dreams—a perfect Monarch.

Weaker women would have asked for counsel. She was her own and her son's sole law-giver. She did not even seek to ease her often overburdened spirit by confiding to others the anxieties that possessed her during long, wretched nights of pondering, long days of earnest reflection upon the then far from reassuring state of her son's inheritance, but kept silence, indomitably scorning the tribunals of all human wisdom save her own.

"God must see the grandeur of my endeavor," she once said, "and His help is all I demand."

*"Apprendre à faire son métier de souverain!"* This was what Archduke Franz had now to do, and it must be confessed that nothing was neglected which could help him thereto, and also that he himself showed remarkable good-will and aptitude in so doing.



## CHAPTER II

"FRANZI," the simple-hearted boy who had infinitely preferred the society of Doppelbauer to that of courtiers, and the simple joys of country-life to the amusements of cities, had now to relinquish both, to a certain extent, and to turn his undivided attention to all the branches of science and of practical knowledge necessary for him to study.

The days when his tutors, Count Heinrich Bombelles and Count Johann Coronini, had sought to awaken and set in motion his childish intelligence under the interlacing roses of the lake-pavilion at Weissenbach were but a memory, and together with four young nobles—his "brothers-in-arms," as he called them—Prince Richard Metternich, son of the great Chancellor; Count Karl Bombelles, son of his tutor, and who, after a very checkered career, became, many years later, the instructor of poor, ill-fated Crown-Prince Rudolf; Count Franz Coronini, son of his second tutor, and finally Count Taaffe, afterwards one of Austria's greatest Prime-Ministers, Archduke Franz began his military training under Colonel von Hauslab, a superb soldier and a man of talent, warm-hearted, conscientious, and brave.

Nor was this training child's play, for the future Ruler of Austro-Hungary was made to begin at the very beginning, just like any other recruit, and if his clothes were finer, his food better prepared, and his lodging different from that of the rest of his Majesty Ferdinand I.'s private soldiers, the fatigues entailed by the break-

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ing of his Majesty's nephew to harness were by no means lighter than those endured by them. He was completely given up to the grasp of that great war mechanism which untiringly turns out what the French graphically term "*de la chair à canon*," and sometimes it seemed to him as if he had himself become a piece of machinery, a mere mannikin making gestures in obedience to a wire pulled by a ruthlessly authoritative hand. He was made to groom his own horse, to saddle and bridle and feed it, to serve and manœuvre a cannon. He was put through ordinary infantry drill, was taught to lay mines under the direction of a colonel of sappers, to handle a pick and shovel shoulder to shoulder with the gray-uniformed men of the pioneer corps, and from six in the morning until late at night the lad labored almost unceasingly, dropping rifle or sword only to sit before a desk where his theoretical and classical education was pursued most industriously.

None but the young Archduke himself knew at that time the extent of the sacrifice he was making, not to his own ambition, but to his mother's, in thus turning his every thought and effort, and devoting his every moment to the accomplishment of her wishes, and indeed, a budding sportsman like himself, keen of eye and swift of foot, fond, above all things, of freedom and of out-door pastimes, must have suffered exceedingly under this iron ferule of science and learning.

Count Taafe, who was his favorite "brother-in-arms," told me one evening, as we sat amid the giant hollyhocks, the flowering linden-trees, and the ripening cherries of a delicious garden mirrored in the calm, broad, moonlit waters of the Moldau—or rather the Veltava, as that beautiful river is called by its soft, melodious Czech name—how he had often watched his Imperial comrade curb torturing restlessness, feverish impatience, and an

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almost unconquerable desire to revolt, with a determination and a force seemingly sufficient to make his every muscle and mental fibre break and snap, until he had mastered himself and sat quiet and victorious with big beads of moisture on his pale brow. How, also, many years later, Francis-Joseph had confessed to him that he had several times been on the point of shaking himself free from his trammels, and had held on only by sheer force of will, battling with himself until he felt absolutely broken and tired out, and was once more passive and subdued, like a beaten horse. Then, pitilessly, fiercely, he lashed himself forward, starting afresh again and again in this superb conquest of self.

Still he was far from really disliking the strange and interesting experiences which were his, spending, as he did, so many hours of the day among the rank and file—laborers, artisans, and peasants—gathered together by the great military dredge from every corner of the Empire, and all and sundry helped to make of him the man he has become—well-informed, and understanding, with the sympathy born of personal contact, the lives, the sorrows, and the joys of the lowliest of his people.

He was at once oppressed and stimulated by that high ideal, that shadowing forth of the unattainable which his own soul no less than his mother held ever before his eyes, and dreading not to justify his birthright by distancing his compeers, he worked with desperate energy, alternately confident and despairing of success.

Gradually, however, the brave lad became more silent and reserved; he withdrew into himself and brooded alone over the heavy burden of his destiny, until it seemed to him that the form of the Ruler he was to be took shape and hue, and stood forth from the atmosphere embodied at his side. He saw it with his bodily eyes, he spoke to it (this I have from his own lips), it

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went with him wherever he went, and was his constant companion. He believed this brilliant, intangible form to be his fate, and if it were absent he feared lest it should wish to forsake him, and would pursue it in spirit, entreating its return. As if, indeed, our fate could be avoided or lost! Alas, whether we love or abhor it, it will surely and steadily attend our steps, for such is the law, immutable as those of the Medes and Persians!

In turn the future Emperor of Austro-Hungary was placed under the orders of Colonel Löschner, Captain Sachse, Lieutenant Kappler, Major Eitel von Seean, Colonel Dominick Beck, Captains Giesel, Wüstefeld, Singer, Baron von Smola, etc., as he passed from the infantry to the cavalry, from the artillery to the sappers, the Jägers and the pioneers, until at last he himself became able to command the officers who had taught him, and who reddened with pride when the clear, young voice of their beloved pupil shouted an order to them across the parade-ground.

Gradually, slowly, too, but steadily and surely, a great alteration became noticeable in the Imperial youth.

There is a flowering of knowledge and of dearly bought experience distinct as the burgeoning of an orchard in spring. Sometimes the face of a boy merging into manhood becomes almost insolent with triumph when the nature of that boy happens to be evil; sometimes it is wistful in its shy and painful lack of self-confidence, although the strong, brave heart may pulsate for the days and the great deeds that are to come; and again, it may show the inane satisfaction of a being entirely pleased with himself, and daring the future to teach him something he does not already know.

None of these feelings were to be read on Archduke

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Franz's handsome countenance; there dwelt there usually a thoughtful expression, suggestive of hidden and unfathomed depths, and through his eyes, clear and blue and honest as in earlier years, shone a soul of truth, a proud reserve of latent patience and courage, with already more than a hint of an inflexible determination surprising in so young a man.

He had become extremely attached to the army, both as its future commander, and also as an integral part thereof, belonging to it body and soul—perchance because he had begun to learn all about it at an age when most boys are ignorant of even the more ordinary nomenclature of military matters. A passionate devotion to the heroes of antiquity interfered to a certain extent with his comprehension and appreciation of the great captains of modern times; but this delving into the past through the medium of books and black letter-records, this sedulous raking among the ashes of dead centuries, brought to him the tonic effect of many an example, and many a precept that braced him to the arduous task of resisting the lavish flattery and enervating adulation to which all Royal personages are exposed. He always preferred warriors to diplomats and politicians, and felt himself more in sympathy with men in action than with scheming minds—a mental attitude which was placed to his credit by most of those who prophesied for him a splendid career once he had ascended the throne.

It was a distinct piece of good-fortune for a man destined to rule over the most polyglottic territory in the universe, that he was so remarkably quick at acquiring languages. His excellent and perfectly trained musical ear helped him greatly in the pronunciation of the barbaric consonants with which Hungarian, Slovák, Czech, and most of the other idioms of the Dual-Empire abound, and as early as October, 1847, he won the hearts of the



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Magyars when, for the first time speaking in public as the Emperor's representative, he addressed them in their own tongue instead of making use, as was customary on such occasions, of the Latin language. The enthusiasm knew no bounds, and loud *Eljens* repeatedly drowned the young orator's voice, for every Hungarian present felt the compliment to his nation, and when, a few months afterwards, Kossuth reminded the hot-headed, royal-hearted Magyars of this incident at a moment of great danger for the Habsburg dynasty, the response was immediate, and all vied in showing their appreciation of an Austrian Prince who had not thought it beneath his dignity to learn their difficult language so as to be able to address them directly, without the mediation of priests or interpreters. From that moment, to the Hungarian mind, even during the days of the rebellion, he was a personality apart from his entire House.

That keen-witted, keen-eyed woman, Archduchess Sophia, realized perfectly that at the completion of his studies her handsome boy would enter into that period—dangerous to all young men, but especially to one cast amid the countless temptations which environ Royal personages—when the slumbering senses awaken. Nor was she to be blamed for almost morbidly dreading the feminine adorations, which would be thrown at a Prince whose personal and intellectual gifts would have made him a singularly winning and seductive youth, even had he belonged to any other and much humbler walk of life. Her only hope was in his extreme fastidiousness and delicacy of mind and tastes—in these there would assuredly be salvation from any ordinary intrigue—but still she incessantly watched him with terrified anxiety, lest all that was so deliciously spiritual and innocent in him should be destroyed by the merciless witchery of illicit love, for she was too thorough-paced a woman of the

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world not to know that the first passion of a boy colors all his future, and that he who has once passed the gates of disillusion never quite recovers from the shock nor regains a tithe of the self-esteem he has sacrificed.

"*A blonde aux yeux noirs!*" I have been told that there is but one thing men of taste admire as much, and that is a "*Brune aux yeux bleus,*" but that they are both surpassed by a "*Rousse aux yeux gris!*" Of course, much depends upon the face, the figure, and the personal witchery of such *charmeuses*, but in Austria dark-eyed blondes, beautiful of face and form, are not the exception, but very nearly the rule, as many, many brave gentlemen of that enticing and fascinating country have known to their cost.

Well, once upon a time—to be precise, in 1847—there breathed and loved at the Court of a puissant monarch—Emperor Ferdinand of Austria—to conceal nothing of this little fairy tale—just such a siren, a "*blonde aux yeux noirs,*" with eyes long and dark and exceeding lustrous, embellished yet more by a provoking droop of curly lashes, and by delicately pencilled eyebrows, as dark as they. Her tresses were not only blond—they were of purest gold, of spun sunbeams, or, good people, if you should prefer it so put, as sparkling as if daintily powdered and frosted with some extraordinarily brilliant yellow diamond dust. What has such hair to do with the hackneyed "ripe corn," "amber," or "copper" similes so dear to novelists? Nothing whatsoever, I assure you; it was much, much finer than all these!

Add to the above enumeration a dazzlingly fair skin, a small, straight, imperceptibly tip-tilted nose, with delicately rose-tinted nostrils of an emotional, vibrating type, lips full, sensuous, red as the bud of the pomegranate, disclosing short, pearl-white teeth, a slender but perfectly rounded figure, singularly tiny feet and hands,

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and that most surpassingly excellent thing in woman, a voice low, rich, and sweet, and you will, I believe, see before your mind's eye a marvellously lovely being whom Greuze would have rapturously immortalized had he only been wise enough to avoid the fatal error of coming into the world a great deal too soon.

Nor do I desire it to be overlooked that this enchantress was by birth, and by marriage as well, entitled to crown her glittering curls with a "*couronne fermée*," "*ce qui ne gâte jamais joli visage*."

Diogenes himself could have been pardoned for falling a victim to such a being, especially if he had been granted the sight of her half-searching, half-bashful glances, through those strangely silky lashes, or heard her mocking, tantalizing, tinkling, bewitching, airy laugh.

A beauty whose *insouciance* and piquant freedom of speech and manner have all the grace taught by the breeding of Courts is fatally dangerous and dangerously fatal, for there is simply no escaping such a combination. Our siren was, moreover, the most capricious coquette that ever broke hearts with a fan-handle, peeping the while with mischievous cruelty around the corner of her *noli-me-tangere* shield, in a fashion which even St. Anthony—one may as well cite celebrities while about it—would assuredly not have resisted.

How could anybody doubt that when young Archduke Franz came face to face with this entrancing apparition he would fall a victim to her extraordinary charm? The fateful meeting took place on a gala night at Schönbrunn, in one of those superb salons still rustling with the melodious swish of *robes à la Pompadour*, and the echo of eighteenth-century "*galantries*"—a true replica of Versailles in its palmiest days—with the delicate fragrance of *poudre à la Maréchale* and of *Frangipani* lingering in the pale brocades of its draperies.





A "BAIL-BEI-HOF" AT THE BURG



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On that particular night, in spite of the grievously troubled political horizon, the great palace was full of color, of life, of music, and of laughter. Entering the salon in question, and finding it untenanted, as he thought, the young Archduke was about to retreat to the terrace, when, framed by the faint greens and pinks of the window-curtains, he caught sight of the slender, graceful form of a woman thrown out in exquisite relief against the moonlit haze of the flower-laden terrace beyond.

Clad in ivory-hued laces, and with a diadem of gigantic emeralds sparkling in her dazzling hair, stood this loveliest of all lovely Court beauties, her dark eyes dancing with sunny laughter, her sweet lips half parted, her ridiculously small hands holding back the curtains which had concealed her, intentionally, until then—a picture quite inimitable in its soft, delicious brilliancy.

For a moment the young man stood transfixed and totally startled out of his usual self-possession, then he bowed profoundly, with the Old-World courtesy, which sat so well on this tall, slim, blond-locked boy of seventeen.

Love is a quick match, easily lighted, which often flares into burning flame at a single glance, and from the instant when he set eyes on that seductive, bizarre, irresistible beauty, with her dangerous under-glances and her childlike bloom, as dainty as the flush on a sea-shell, a dizzy, breathless, all-consuming intoxication mastered, snared, and captivated him against his will.

This was the first whisper of love's song, that music which, alas! so often leads a man, to the accompaniment of sweetest melody, from the snowy-perfumed arms of Circe to wreck and death and despair.

Archduchess Sophia when she saw them together looked on aghast and horrified. She knew, without the consoling possibility of a doubt, that this queen of

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loveliness was a coquette, absolutely merciless in her wiles, a woman intensely selfish, heartless, one of those who "live on the censuring of fools, and spend their time in fooling wise men," and she decided to resort to heroic measures in order to remove her "future sovereign" from the influence of this particular *blonde aux yeux noirs*.

The young man had but very little in common at that time with the easy-going, merry, happy-go-lucky Viennese whom he so sincerely loved and admired. Courtly, silent, extraordinarily self-contained for his age, passions swift and strong had lain dormant within him until partially awakened by the gloriously beautiful woman whom, having met, he was to leave almost at once.

Had the spell not been broken at one blow, the risk for him would have indeed been great, for he was as yet too young and inexperienced to perceive her tactics and to defy them, as well as to prevent his pulses from quickening under the fire of her lustrous eyes; and, moreover, clever enchantress that she was, she had, even in the short days of their acquaintance, managed to impress him with the many alleged sorrows of her life, and posed, with misleading and astonishing art, as a Miranda married to a Caliban, although this was decidedly overstraining the truth. Her lord was neither particularly young nor particularly attractive, yet he was neither a fool nor a knave. Moreover, he was very much in love with her, and, being exceedingly wealthy, delighted in satisfying her every caprice. Nevertheless, her sweet, pathetic attitude of *femme incomprise* appealed strongly to the chivalry which was Archduke Franz's most marked characteristic, and his eyes invariably softened with adoring pity and boundless sympathy when they met hers.

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It had long been decided that, his studies completed, Archduke Franz should be appointed Governor of Bohemia, the dignity to be assumed as soon as he had accomplished a series of Royal and Imperial visits throughout Europe. But political events, and especially the arrival upon the scene of the dusky-eyed blonde, interfered decisively with this carefully laid plain.

The tempest which was beginning to rage both within and without Austro-Hungary gave the Archduchess a more than valid excuse to momentarily *éloigner* her son. Of course it was necessary for him to receive his baptism of fire, and with an aching heart, but unfalteringly, the mother took the first step in the scheme which put, for the first time, many, many miles of battle-ravaged country between herself and the only being she loved in the world, and also before all was said or done, placed in his young hands the reins of government amid *Sturm und Drang*.

The situation of Austro-Hungary was at that moment a truly lamentable one, for that unhappy country was at war with a twofold enemy; at war with Italy beyond the borders, and at home, alas! with a steady wave of disloyalty and revolt rapidly arising, which threatened to submerge and destroy the monarchy itself. Indeed, the very air seemed instinct with black despair, and from none knew where a sense of some dim, portentous tragedy—as yet distant, but approaching swiftly—that threatened the trembling star of the Habsburgs, crept into every loyal heart.

Rising revolution closed in the pathway to the future as a gloomy, crumbling tunnel might that of an onward rushing train, and so terrifying was its menacing darkness that Austrians may well be pardoned if they did not then realize that their beloved Fatherland was rushing towards the light, after all, and that the boy who



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was soon to assume control of that mad and headlong course would, with all his brave young heart filled but by one thought—that of saving Crown and honor, and of bringing safely into prosperity the country which by Right Divine was his to rule—succeed in his terrible task beyond all expectations.

In the spring of 1848 Archduchess Sophia had a long and tumultuous interview with the Emperor, which resulted in his future successor being allowed to join Field-Marshal Count Radetzky at Verona, where the old hero was encamped, and as soon as this was done the delighted youth, who, in the enthusiasm of martial ardor had, for the time being at least, forgotten his dawning passion, set off for the field of war at the head of the Third Regiment of Dragoons, of which he was colonel both *de jure* and *de facto*.

A terrible void was left in the hearts and lives of his parents by his departure, and Archduchess Sophia, to whom he had, until very lately, brought nothing but unclouded satisfaction, began to ascend the Calvary of all mothers in fear and trembling for their sons' lives. Even she, the stout of heart, almost broke down when bidding him Godspeed—a weakness which she would never have forgiven herself. Indeed, the few who witnessed that good-bye scene noticed that she closed her eyes for a moment, as if striving for control, and that a slight sound, like a quick catching of the breath, escaped from her white lips.

Poor Archduchess! this struggle between her cruel anxiety for the safety of her son, her absolute horror of showing how deeply she felt the impending separation, and with all her disgust at discovering that she, strong-minded *par excellence*, should be but a tender, loving, frightened mother, like the rest of that long-suffering genus, was nearly the final undoing of her

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stoical philosophy, and it seemed to her as if this hour would drive her beyond the confines of reason.

There are moments when such a catastrophe seems imminent, when a human creature is tortured to this bitter extreme, and when all normal faculty of self-control, all power of considering matters from the standpoint of the necessary, the practical, or the expedient, is suddenly and terribly withdrawn. Keenly realizing all this, the mother silently fought for strength to retain her habitual marble mask, but the effort was one of those that sometimes kill, and a blank look came upon her face, the look that usually precedes a fainting fit, and the hands which she had mechanically stretched towards him wavered confusedly, as if groping in the dark for something.

Meanwhile her "Franzi"—nothing but her own "little Franzi" now—stood before her in his campaigning uniform, a slight, almost imperceptible tremor passing over his face from the lips upward to the eyes, although he was apparently wholly absorbed in the arrangement of his sword-knot.

Neither attempted to speak. Again the mother's slightly trembling hands were hesitatingly held out, and then impatiently drawn back, as if the controlling spirit had laid a harsh, restraining grasp upon the bridle of impulse. Suddenly the tension broke, the young warrior seized her violently in his arms, and, with closed eyes, pressed his face hard against her neck, like a child in pain.

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Northern Italy, in the early spring, is the nearest approach to paradise which man can visit, with its cypress

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woods and olive-groves of silvered green, its clambering rose-vines hanging fragrant blossoms from every bough, its thickets of camellia and rhododendron, its fields of lilies, where purple dissolves into blue and crimson, blue into a thousand mauve, violet, and roseate overtones, and the vivid green of the lush grass into every dainty elusive kindred hue known to the spectrum.

In such a climate nature, with the help of a stray beam of sunshine, a thimbleful of dew, a puff of breeze from the hills, and a handful of rich, brown earth, can distil the very fragrance of heaven.

Amid this riot of delicate odor goldfinches, greenfinches, blackcaps, nightingales, and robin-redbreasts disport themselves and shower their full bright notes in tiny rills and thrills and runs of exquisite harmony from the protecting depths of the foliage, each little feathered throat pulsating in time to the crystalline music, like a live and extraordinarily melodious metronome.

The spell of spring, and of that lovely land he was visiting for the first time, were upon Archduke Franz as he arrived in Radetzky's camp. The melancholy of departure had absolutely disappeared, and a great happiness welled up in his heart.

He was going into action! What magic in those few words. Heir to a great Empire and to great traditions of honor and fearlessness, to great duties and obligations as well, he owed it, therefore, to his ancestors to do the very utmost within his power in order to revive and maintain the Habsburg honor, of which he was the custodian—he, the banner-bearer of his race! The time had come, God be praised! when he could unfurl this banner bravely and nobly in the sight of the world. That was his mission, the work he was born to do, he thought exultantly, as he directed his steps towards the spot where he was to meet Radetzky.



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For a moment he stopped, gazing straight ahead at the fair landscape flooded with brilliant sunshine, but seeing nothing save his familiar phantasm striding proudly before him to victory and glory. Excepting this there was nothing else in all created space for him that day but battling armies, waving standards, and the rush of charging squadrons; and at the sound of the war-trumpet his soul came forth from its hiding-place and shone in his eyes, looking fearlessly towards the future.

The Field-Marshal did not relish the responsibility placed upon him by the arrival of the Heir-Apparent to go under fire for the first time under his—Radetzky's—orders, and almost comically did the face of the young Archduke lengthen when the blunt-spoken old warrior curtly exclaimed:

“Your Imperial Highness's presence here is very disagreeable to me! Should anything happen to you, what will be said of me?—and if you should be taken prisoner all the advantages that I might otherwise gain over the enemy will, of course, be set at naught.”

He spoke peremptorily, his multitudinous wrinkles expressive of extreme displeasure, his bold, unflinching hawk eyes forcing themselves to forget that he was addressing his future sovereign.

The Archduke could not repress a nervous and rather abashed little laugh, but, with a slightly breathless and triumphant enunciation, he replied:

“‘Herr Feldmarschall,’ it may have been imprudent to send me here, but here I am, and here I stay. It is my place!” Then, drawing himself up and saluting stiffly, he added: “I have the honor to report myself for duty.”

Radetzky hastily turned his eyes—in which a suspicious glint had suddenly appeared—down the avenue of tents, before which file after file of soldiers stood at

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attention, for this brave veteran of eighty-two now saw in the lad of seventeen his own youth rising up before him, as well as the ardent hope of the Imperial House he had served so long and loyally. With a deep inclination he grasped the Archduke's hand, and would have raised it to his withered lips, but, freeing himself, the young man threw his arms about the bent old form and embraced his commanding officer as had he been his own father, while the palest flicker of a smile passed over the imperturbable face of the aide-de-camp in attendance as he watched the conflicting emotions of his chief.

Neither the Archduke nor the Field-Marshal spoke again until, walking side by side, they had reached the latter's quarters.

Radetzky often declared afterwards that his had not at that period been a bed of roses, for he had the unprecedented and uncomfortable honor of numbering among his officers and generals not only the Archdukes Albrecht and Wilhelm, sons of the victor of Aspern, who had joined him at the beginning of the campaign, but alas! now also the apple of Archduchess Sophia's eye—Archduchess Sophia who was feared throughout Austria—her first-born, fashioned by her strong, clever hands to occupy the Dual Throne, and whose death she would never forgive.

As for the young Archduke himself, he from the first moment took to active military life as a duck takes to water, and the highest-trained, longest-inured soldier of Radetzky's army did not endure privation with more content and more fortitude than he.

On May 6th he received his baptism of fire at Santa Lucia, and bore himself throughout that fiercely fought battle in the splendid manner so fitly celebrated by the lines of Wernhart—"Die Feuerprobe"—of which I here give a copy for those who admire war-poetry.



THE EMPEROR'S BAPTISM OF FIRE AT SANTA LUCIA



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Die Trommel rief zum Sturme  
Einst bei Sanct Lucia,  
Da gieng es an ein Streiten  
So kühn von beiden Seiten  
Wie ich kein zweites sah.

Die Söhne Österreichs rangen  
Uns Recht so manche Stund';  
Doch furchtbar kam das Feuer  
Aus Lucias Gemäuer,  
Wie aus der Hölle Schlund.

Da ritt aus den Schwadronen  
Ein junger Officier,  
Er flog beim Kugelregen  
Dem Feindeshort entgegen,  
Voll edler Kampfbegier.

Als er an unsern Reihen  
Gehemmt des Rosses Lauf,  
Da rief er "Vorwärts Jäger!  
Seid ihr des Ruhmes Träger  
Auf dieser Thürme h'nauf!"

Das Wort kaum ausgesprochen  
Hat Wunder schon gethan;  
Die Feinde zu bezwingen,  
Gieng's wie auf Adlerschwingen  
Den steilen Berg hinan.

Der schmucke Reiter wusste,  
Dass Muth nur gilt im Krieg,  
Bestand im Kampfgetobe  
Mit uns die Feuerprobe,  
Und unser war der Sieg.

Kennt ihr den Heldenjüngling,  
Der kühn voran uns flog?  
Franz-Josef war's, der Kaiser,  
Der sich schon Lorbeerreiser  
Gepflückt als Erzherzog.

It would take a cleverer pen than mine to adequately describe the look of absolute anguish which so many

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noticed on Radetzky's face on that memorable day, when he saw Archduke Franz quietly check his charger in the thickest of a storm of bullets, and without so much as a flicker of the eyelids remain watching intently the progress of the enemy. Nor had the natural excitement of the moment, the bracing smell of powder, the swishing sound of the wind-tossed flags anything to do with the martial attitude of this neophyte, for he was indeed a born soldier. He gently waved away Feldmarschall-Lieutenant Baron d'Aspre, who was imploring him to take shelter, conjuring him to remember the extreme value of his life, and whose ferocious glares and gestures of impotent exasperation and despair were received by the object of all this undesired solicitude with a disarmingly winning smile, as, settling himself squarely in his saddle, the amused Archduke replied, slowly, softly, but with complete and inexorable obstinacy: "I won't go!"

This day of initiation was, perchance, the longest, the most agitating, the most elating, and the most unforgettable the young Archduke had ever spent. Expectant of the end, as one who toils upward towards some towering hidden summit of dazzling magnificence, he lost the sense of time, of fatigue, of hunger, of thirst, every sense, in fact, but that of a strange joy, almost fierce in its intensity. For hour after hour there was no relaxation of muscles, no throwing off of tension, the lids never drooped over the intently gazing eyes, the firm lips scarcely parted; the whole energetic young figure was alert with passionate vitality, with fascinated enthusiasm.

He never forgot, at any rate, the sunset of that day, of which he still loves to talk, the dull blue of thunderclouds that brooded in the west, the sky of purple and gold, the warmth and soft transparency of living color amid which the fiery sphere went down in indescribable



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majesty, seen through the ruddy veil of smoke drifting from the battle-field—an orgy of sky and cloud tints fronted by the darkness of threatening vapors, which formed, had he but known it, so fitting an emblem of his future.

Prudence had been at no time among his prominent characteristics, and this glorious defence of the Austrians, this lucky throw of Radetzky's last card, was not calculated to teach caution to a young man normally deficient in it. The latent instinct in him—the instinct that had flashed out in days of keen sport on the dangerous summits of the Tyrolean Alps—was that of absolute, unconscious courage, and he found something of himself, a familiarity as of previous experience, in the heat of battle, the rush of the charge, and the reckless devilry of clashing regiments.

Tears of pride stood in his eyes as he saw a handful of men—twelve companies—fighting successfully against five entire brigades, an almost unheard-of, almost unsurpassed feat of arms. These men were the flower of Radetzky's army, and they moved with the ferocity of tigers, with wondrous celerity, hurling themselves upon the Piedmontese, their hands gripped hard upon their weapons, their white coats stained with dust and blood, until Austrian and Italian were blended in one inextricable mass.

The Austrian cavalry, hemmed in between infantry and artillery, for a long time was unable to charge, every man keeping his life by a ceaseless hand-to-hand sword-play, beautiful to behold, but nevertheless bitter, stifling, cruel work, during which many a saddle was emptied, many lives crushed out under the stamping hoofs of the maddened horses. But at last the moment long looked for, long desired, arrived, and with lightning rapidity Archduke Franz seized it. Spurring his horse against



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the wall of swarthy, savage Italian faces, and waving his sword above his head, the young colonel literally threw his dragoons upon their now swaying and yielding ranks. The men rushed forward in a superb effort, like arrows launched from a thousand powerful bows. The impetuosity of their charge was irresistible, and bore King Albert's troops headlong before it. Men fell on every side, to be ground into pulp upon the blood-soaked ground. Above the hellish din, the tumult and the shouting, the wild neighing of chargers, and the roar of musketry and of cannon, rang out a succession of coolly given orders from the ever-changing spot where, with the reek of smoke and of carnage around him, rode Archduke Franz, a slim, inspiring figure on his rearing, fretting, curvetting charger, as he forced his way through a storm of blows and a hurricane of projectiles, leading the sweep of his squadrons over the lifeless forms of the fallen.

When at length this superb feat of arms was over, the soldiers crowded shouting about him. They had had enough of monarchs who sat sedately at home and looked upon a throne as the most comfortable of resting-places; a man of action was what they desired, and here, indeed, was a slender, blue-eyed Prince, their future Emperor and *Generalissimo*, who had been tried and not found wanting! Therefore, with enthusiasm raised to boiling-point, as much by the modesty of his bearing as by what he had done, they rent the air with cries of "*Hoch!*" they kissed his hands, his clothing, his very boots, and, had he permitted it, would have carried him in triumph upon their shoulders amid frenzied hurrahs.

As he came face to face with Radetzky, the grave, noble-looking old man doffed his plumed hat and bent to his saddle-bow.

"God grant," he said, in a strangely unsteady voice, "that our soldiers may emulate Your Imperial Highness

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wherever our colors are displayed. God bless Your Imperial Highness!"

"I did nothing," replied the Archduke, quietly. "Any of your officers would do what I have done." And then, pointing with his naked sword towards the battle-field, "It is with to-day's dead that glory lies!"

Once again wild, frantic, tumultuous cheers sounded like the call of trumpets, sending his name through the heavy, powder-laden air. He was their predestined leader, and every heart beat with the joy of having found him; nor would one man of that crowding soldiery have hesitated to follow him into the very jaws of death had he but said the word.

A great courage, a cool head, and a quick decision are the chief qualities of an officer, but to those qualities Archduke Franz added one which, if it is not so essential, is, at all events, most rare and endearing—a kindness of heart, which in truth knew no bounds, an infinite compassion for those who had suffered the mischances of war, and though he had been many hours in the saddle, and had tasted no food since dawn, he now turned unhesitatingly towards the wounded and dying that strewed the ground.

The sights which met his eye were assuredly awful enough to make a far more hardened soldier quail; but though at times he could hardly keep back the tears from his eyes, he labored like any surgeon amid that scene of suffering and misery, without shrinking from those who writhed in their agony, or from the distorted corpses, with mutilated limbs, scattered singly or huddled together as they had fallen, in ghastly mounds of horrible entanglement, under the rising moon.

Tenderly, fearlessly he continued his self-imposed task, seeking for lingering life among both friend and foe, and saving it, too, in many cases, with a curious, untaught

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surgical skill, until, at length, when the night was far advanced, utterly exhausted, he consented to eat and rest, and rolling himself in his long cavalry coat sank into a half-lethargic slumber under the calm stars shining with undisturbed lustre in the deep violet sky far, far above his head.

At home, meanwhile, the lonely mother, although none of those about her would have believed it, thought night and day, with increasing agony, of the naked horrors of war. To her war was not a great pageant dressed in the splendid array of romance—the presence of a beloved life at the front is not conducive to such illusions—but a grewsome tragedy, a bitter, deadly truth, made only more terrible by the glitter of accoutrements, the polish of costly weapons, the snowy whiteness of tents over which droop the silken folds of gold-embroidered flags, all that pomp which but emphasizes hunger, cold, heat, racking physical pain, thirst, travail, and torture, except for the novelist or the poet looking on from afar, and whose perspective is so often faulty.

No one ever heard the Archduchess sigh, or saw tears in her deep-set eyes, and she never in any way alluded to her torturing anxiety, not even under the seal of confession. Its pain was buried in her own breast, and none guessed its depth. Her expression had always been grave, her beauty of a severe type, her moods silent; therefore her present frozen calm successfully covered and concealed the fire burning within. Her only consolation was her stern conception of the demands of honor, and to these she forced herself to yield obedience, instead of to those tyrannically haunting impulses which bade her recall her boy, for the time was not yet.

A letter written privately to her by Radetzky, however, and which she mentioned to none, made her reconsider this verdict with passionate alacrity. Archduke Franz

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was doing far more than honor demanded, far, far more than even she had expected of him. This being so, she decided to bring him back, but without laying bare her shameful fears, without sacrificing her self-respect and dignity, for superficially she had been throughout so inflexibly unemotional that she could not thus at the last openly acknowledge her weakness.

That very day she sought her brother-in-law, whose Imperial will was, alas! but as spun glass in her hands, and who greatly feared her. He was conscious that her intelligence was far keener than his own, that she was never vague or uncertain as to any course of action, that it was impossible to hoodwink her; and instinctively realized, although her wire-pulling was almost always too subtle for his dull vision, that he was only a mere puppet, everlastingly dancing to her imperious piping and eternally obeying her viewless directions. He dreaded her silences, generally pregnant with storm, and yet more her closely reasoned, ironical speeches, which invariably rose in the peroration to a caustic, withering, exquisitely rounded eloquence of polite invective. He felt keenly her contempt for his complacent narrowness of mind, his boundless egotism, his small, contracted views, begotten of formula, his singularly conventional religiosity, which clipped and trimmed everything to suit his own wishes, and especially his weak, ailing body, already at fifty-five that of an old man, and his yet weaker mentality.

Emperor Ferdinand had inherited from his father, Emperor Francis, a veneration for rectitude, but nature had not endowed him with his father's capacity to undergo bodily and mental exertions for the welfare of his people, and the latter seldom understood him.

The art of pleasing is more based on that of seeming pleased than is generally known, and the sickly, fretful

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man who occupied the throne gave the continual impression that he lamented his unhappy lot in season and out of season. In this case, also, the old proverb which says, "Be honey and the flies will eat you," was glaringly exemplified. He was too meek, too easily cozened and led with delicate flattery, and especially too anxious to conciliate both the cabbage and the goat to ever cope successfully with the fearful problems he had been set to solve.

Another saying—one of wise old Talleyrand's—Ferdinand unfortunately never remembered, "Live with your friends, but remember that one day they will be your enemies," and this neglect ended by costing him dear.

Assuredly his life as a monarch was not a happy one. The long, weary days unrolled themselves drearily before him, beginning in the morning with altercation and strife, continuing with cares and fatigues, ending often in rough dispute, and knowing peace of a sort only during the rare absences of Archduchess Sophia; but, of course, a man more energetic than himself could easily have alleviated, if not entirely obliterated, all these troubles.

On a delicious morning in early May, when thousands of song-birds filled the grand old trees of Schönbrunn with melody, or played hide-and-seek in the tall, feathery weeds and purple iris along the margins of the fountains, when the deer bounded through the grassy, beech-studded slopes of the park, trampling violets, primroses, and stars of Bethlehem under their scurrying hoofs, Archduchess Sophia joined the Emperor in the "Gloriette," where he was delightedly inhaling the soft, fragrant breezes.

At her approach a heavy gloom overcast his wrinkled countenance, and he rose to greet her with an almost childish pettishness.



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The Archduchess inclined her proud head in acknowledgment of his curt bow, and, seating herself upon a marble bench, let her eyes dwell earnestly upon the sunlit landscape, as if to do so were her only object in life.

"A beautiful morning," said the Emperor, nervously, with an involuntary twitching of the lips which he never could restrain when speaking to her.

"Beautiful!" assented the Archduchess, and then relapsed into cool silence.

The aide-de-camp, standing behind his sovereign, said, later, to a friend, that the wretched old man looked to him at that moment like a bird trembling at the near approach of a snake.

"We may have a storm later on," continued the monarch, with a desperate attempt at conversational ease and an embarrassed nod of his senile head in the direction of what is called, in Austria, "*die Wetter Seite*" (the weather side).

The Archduchess deigned to lower her gaze to the level of her brother-in-law's cringing form. He had suddenly assumed a look of age, and appeared like one double his years. As her glance met his, he started, and dropped his gold-headed cane with a clatter upon the marble pavement. The aide-de-camp rushed forward, picked it up, handed it respectfully to the Emperor, and retired precipitately into the background, as if glad to avoid the storm-centre. Poor Ferdinand would have greatly liked to do the same, but perforce remained where an unkind fate had sent him, balancing the cane delicately in his thin, blue-veined hand, and studying its turquoise-paved head with every appearance of great and absorbing interest.

"Don't make yourself uneasy," said his tormentor, in the gentlest of voices, "the stones are quite uninjured!"

The Emperor hastily turned away, and, looking across

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the shaded, dark-green turf, dappled with wavering spots of rippling sun-gold, tried to collect himself.

The breath of that peerless morning was like a powerful extract of fragrant blossoms fresh from the hand of a heavenly *parfumeur*, and he was strangely conscious of its charm despite the fear tugging at his heart, that pitiful anguish which should, in the nature of things, fall only to the lot of extreme old age, when the soul nears its flight and feels its inability to struggle with the difficulties and trials of life. There came over him a passionate longing for peace and rest, for cessation of noise and worry, for escape from this apprehension of coming evil, this dread that, like Merlin's, even now shook him as had he been touched by a chill wind, although it was spring-time and the glorious day drowsed warmly on in soft fire and lovely coloring, under his weary, anxious eyes.

Well did he know what she had come to upbraid him about, well did he realize what sins of omission she laid at his door, and greatly did he inwardly revolt at her unsparing criticism and oft-repeated "I told you so." He, with the Habsburg Family and Court, had done little else but scoff at the mere idea of a successful revolution in Austria. Even now it scarcely occurred to any one that the throne was standing in imminent peril and that at any moment the bulwarks of imperialism might burst asunder and the tide of anarchy rush into its magic circle, scattering destruction and death all around. The mass of the people were at the outset opposed to all advanced ideas, their superb loyalty to the reigning dynasty was regarded as absolutely unshakable, and when, in the previous month of March, devastating waves began to lap at the foundations of a hitherto inviolate authority, the phenomenon was beheld with astonishment, and received with gay ridicule, not only by the



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nobility, but by pretty much everybody else as well, always excepting the sharp-sighted Archduchess Sophia.

Her continual *méfiez vous* was unfortunately disregarded, for though the seeds sown by agitators and malcontents fell upon a soil not yet sufficiently prepared to insure a quick fruition, the efforts of the noisy and fanatical minority had at length produced a very noticeable crop.

The reforms instituted by Emperor Joseph, half a century before, had their share in precipitating the catastrophe, for, although they had doubtless alleviated many of the people's miseries at the time, they had not reckoned with the spirit of discontent, which, in these our beautifully enlightened days, was bound to arise from measures which practically extended yet more the power of the Crown.

Poor Emperor Joseph! His self-written epitaph was indeed a true one: "A Prince whose intentions were pure, yet who had the misfortune to see all his plans miscarry."

The time was now ripe for the fruition of just such miscarried, misdirected reforms. Metternich, the great chancellor, the omnipotent arbiter of two reigns, after trying his best to control the upheaval, had failed ignominiously, and since a fortnight had been a fugitive in England. The right to carry arms had been granted to the ignorant multitude, liberty of the press gave opportunity and audience to every scheming or crack-brained agitator, and finally, on the 26th of April, a constitution had been accorded to a people unused to and unfitted for popular government. Indeed, none save a monarch of almost unparalleled strength and sagacity could have averted the misfortunes that were now to overtake the country in this sad year of 1848.

With war beyond her borders, and revolution within them, Austria was, indeed, in a sorry plight; but during

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the silence that fell between the Emperor and his sister-in-law, on that exquisite May morning, he thought of nothing but his own grievances, and the cruel injustice of Providence towards himself in giving him a mentor who loomed unceasingly in his immediate neighborhood, like a tempest-cloud that darkens the sky with a menace sure to be fulfilled.

In the cool assumption of right as a matter of course, there lies an irresistible power. This was one of Archduchess Sophia's greatest weapons, especially when dealing with her weak and easily cowed brother-in-law. She never gave him the slightest chance of doubting her perfect title to dictate to him with superb insolence, for even in her worst wrath she was ever self-controlled, shrewd, and wise. He was paying dearly, indeed, for that most unpardonable and terrible of follies—irresolution.

At last she spoke:

"Do you believe in spectres, Ferdinand?" Her voice was calm and indifferent as usual, and yet he fancied that he could catch the echo of some hidden irony in the low, level tones.

"In spectres? What spectres?" he asked, uneasily, instantly on the defensive.

In the distance the fresh young voice of little Archduke Ludwig-Victor's French nurse rang out suddenly under the trees:

"On a mis la graine en terre,  
Saute donc la brune au son du flûteau!"

"Spectres of your own making, for instance," the Archduchess replied, with a sneer, faint but unmistakable, which revealed her meaning completely.

"En terre près du ruisseau  
Au son de la flûte, au son du flûteau,"

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came the gay, lilting melody, answered by a childish pipe, repeating, joyfully:

"Au son du flûteau! au son du flûteau!"

The Emperor stirred nervously. Then a sudden courage seized him to probe to the depth of her meaning and discover if he could not for once silence those cruel lips and force those calm, scornful eyes to droop before a master. Perchance he had made a succession of false moves. Perhaps instead of retreating he ought to have attacked. So he now assumed a sterner manner, and said, with what decision he could command:

"I wish, Sophia, that if you have anything to say to me you would do so in plain language, instead of adopting that of metaphor. I do really," he concluded, almost recklessly.

"Do you?" she murmured. There was a note of genuine surprise in her voice, and she regarded him curiously, as though she had discovered something new, puzzling, and quite amazingly ridiculous about him.

He struggled against the influence of her eyes, his dry fingers grasping the handle of his gorgeous cane with unconscious force as he leaned forward, resting an elbow on his crossed knees, and forced himself to look her unswervingly in the face, but already his resolution was ebbing away.

"You and I could surely understand each other, Sophia, if only you would be less inclined to think that I wish to thwart you, for, on the contrary, I am only too happy when I can meet your wishes. Tell me what it is that you desire?"

A bowl of milk to a cobra is the better part of valor, for it enables one to retreat unmolested; but Ferdinand's abrupt change of manner, his sudden swerve, and his attempt at charming, instead of risking a bite, was not

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lost upon so clever a woman as his antagonist. Her expression altered from dreamy sarcasm and half-curiosity to extreme alertness, and there was a sharp, belligerent vitality in her whole attitude as she turned towards him, so quickly that he almost dropped his cane again. She stared hard at him, her face set, her chin a little forward, the whole woman a gaze of extreme power.

"How very curious," she said, at last, "that a man born on the steps of a throne, born to be a ruler of men, should be so readily influenced by his likes and dislikes! Neither should ever interfere with prudence, Ferdinand, and you are, I assure you, singularly rash when you try to propitiate me"—the pronoun was superbly emphasized—"in such a paltry fashion. You might just as well attempt to appease a whirlwind by means of a nice little green-enamelled watering-pot."

"My dear Sophia!" pleaded her victim, looking distressedly round for his aide-de-camp, who, however, had long since retreated from view, although duty compelled him, until formally dismissed, to remain within earshot. But the Archduchess cared little for the piteous misery so evidently overwhelming her Imperial relative. It was clearly her place to frighten him into acceding to what she considered necessary for the welfare of the Crown, so she laughed a little, satisfied laugh, and, crossing her slender hands upon her lap, mercilessly resumed:

"In comparing myself to a whirlwind, I am not, I assure you, underrating my humble personality. A whirlwind is a very wholesome thing—it sweeps pestilence away and drives contagion before it."

Ferdinand instantly abjured any lingering remnants of an intention to face the music. "I am shocked at you, Sophia," he said, coaxingly, and with a sickly smile. "What is the use of railing at yourself in this fashion?"

Archduchess Sophia laughed again her exasperating

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little laugh, as if her only object was to see him writhe. She was feeling her way. Her object clearly in view, it was only a question which of her many weapons to use; meanwhile a little judiciously applied touch of the whip would open the way for useful attacks of every description. So she studied him with searching eyes, which he, as usual, avoided, looking intently at a delicate pearly cloud travelling across the radiant sky like a graceful swan upon a lake of azure.

He would have sincerely preferred an encounter with a virago from the slums, flying at him with oaths and curses, or tearing him bodily like a wild cat, to this fencing and parrying with a polished, shrewd, absolutely relentless adversary, who took advantage of every weakness, and knew where to find every defect in his thin, ill-fitting armor. More than ever before he felt like a man upon whose breast crouches some beautiful, fierce animal, some exquisitely graceful, velvety leopard or jaguar, from the clutches of which, struggle as he will, there is no escape. But a sullen, desperate anger began to rise in his breast, against life, against fate, and especially against her. His hands suddenly closed on his ill-fated cane so that the knuckles whitened with the grip.

Archduchess Sophia, with the swift delicacy of perception that made her so dangerous an enemy, divined something of his feelings, and concluded it would be unwise to push her pusillanimous antagonist too far. The worm might turn, and then, what? So, with even more than her accustomed suppleness, she assumed a tone of honest bluntness:

“When I spoke just now of spectres, my dear Ferdinand, I meant simply that ours is an age of cowardice, that chivalry is out of place in it, and that we, who once could consider ourselves as the masters of the universe,



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are now haunted day and night by all the grim phantoms of revolution and civil war. In saying 'we,' I of course allude to our order, but especially to yourself, for whom revolution is no longer a spectre, but a stern, ghastly reality, with which you must count and against which you must fight. As racing-men say, you are not having a very 'rosy time' of it just now!"

The tragic expression of fear and exasperation upon Ferdinand's face gave way to a bitterly humorous smile. "No," he acquiesced, in an undertone, with a sidelong glance at her through half-closed lids, "I am not having a very 'rosy time' of it, as you are pleased to put it."

"Naturally, for apart from anything else you are garroted by the collar of your own conscience, or, if you are not, you should be!" The opportunity for the thrust had been too tempting. Her conciliatory intentions were for the moment quite forgotten, and she tapped the marble pavement impatiently with her narrow, admirably shod foot. He shrank from the incisive sentence, then quickly leaned forward. The tension snapped!

"My possible ruin seems to amuse you. Truly, the joy of disparagement never dies!" His voice was rough and uncontrolled, and he clinched his hands yet more convulsively together. "You think I can no longer govern! You dare to hint—oh, God! no, you actually say that my soul, my body, my honor are worthless, worn out, that I am but the parody of a king, an apology for a man! During all the years I have sat on the throne, your derision, your ridicule have made me wince and smart at every turn. You are eternally unsatisfied, you censure everybody, you would walk through blood to the neck to attain your desire. What are you? What are you? What do you want of me? Tell me now, at once, this moment, and I will give it to you so as to gain peace once for all!"

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His tone, at the outset almost one of fierce invective, progressively weakened to a sort of desperate querulousness, and the last words finished in a stifled wail. He had become passionately excited, his eyes were those of a madman. Archduchess Sophia still sat quietly watching him with an expression of undisguised surprise and interest. She seemed about to reply, when suddenly, as if impelled by an external force, he sprang to his feet with an oath:

"What is it that you do want?" he cried, furiously. "My crown to put on the curly pate of your son? Do you think you can get it? By God! you'll never get it while I live! I'll show you yet in whose hands the power lies — power, the only thing you love, the only thing that touches and moves you! What else do you care for? You have but contempt for all humanity, your husband, your children—except Franz, who is to be the instrument of your insane ambition—your whole family, the Empress—myself. Ah, especially myself! Do you think I will always be your tool? I have been—a weak fool for you to sacrifice at your pleasure, to crush under the wheel of your triumphal car—but I'll show you now even at this late hour how little I care for your plots and counter-plots, for your—" Gasping for breath, inarticulate with rage, he stretched out his hands towards her, as if to seize her or hurl her from him.

Archduchess Sophia rose also. She was as calm as ever, although this was apparently but the calm before the storm; for her eyes looked as if she longed to do some act of violence for which great physical force would be necessary, and yet beneath her icy armor ran a cold undercurrent of fear. This scene was something entirely new. After all he was a king, with the powers of his great office ready to his hand, though the hand was such a feeble and unsteady one. Now that, in the ex-



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tremity of his anger, he had momentarily forgotten his overwhelming dread of her, he found a certain dignity, despite his undignified language; he stood erect at his full height, and looked more the monarch than she had ever seen him. Had she gone too far? had she ruined all? would this miserable man actually assert himself after all, overrule her, thwart the plans she had laid, and drag Austria down with him to destruction? Had she really wrung the galled withers once too often?

Her breath failed her, she shuddered at the vision that flashed before her eyes; for just a moment, one short, fleeting moment, she was daunted, had he but known it. She bent her head and set her teeth hard.

If Ferdinand had read her aright, if he had seized this golden opportunity, if he had had a little tenacity of purpose—but it was not to be, and it is well for the future of a great country that, exhausted and terrified by his own unexampled violence, he did not rise to the occasion. Sinking back into his great chair he closed his eyes, overcome by the sickening feeling that he was struggling against the inevitable, against his own wretched fate, that fate he always accused of all his misfortunes, and he bowed his head to the tempest which he knew would now be his punishment.

Archduchess Sophia's eyes flashed with triumph. So she had not been mistaken; it was only a second of galvanic energy, after all! Now her path lay plain before her, and all there was in her of tenacious persistence and ruthless resolution rose up to do battle for her son. Win she would, and now!

She was as one inspired; her extraordinary intensity of feeling communicated itself with telegraphic rapidity to Ferdinand, and he drew back from her apprehensively.

With one swift movement she was beside him, and

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gripped his shoulder between her slender fingers with a force that staggered and shook him from head to foot.

"Sophia! for God's sake, Sophia!" he cried, in terror. "What are you going to do?"

"You want to know what I am going to do?" she said, in a low voice through clinched teeth. "Well, I think I'll tell you, but you will wish you had never asked."

She paused, pressing her lips tightly together, as if to control a rising tide of exultation, and smiled down at him contemptuously. How collapsed and helpless he looked, shrunk into the depths of his great chair! She wondered that for a moment she could have doubted her ability to crush him. As for the Emperor, he would have cried out if he had entertained any hope of being heard, but he had by this time completely forgotten his aide-de-camp, who, even had he been summoned, could certainly not have helped him out of this *mauvais-pas*, and so he looked up at his tormentor with abject fear and almost hypnotic fascination, as if he were drawn against his will to utter destruction within the whirlpool of her ever-growing power.

"You want to know what I am going to do?" she repeated, still smiling and with a hard, cold certainty of intonation and enunciation. "You will know in good time, but first I'll tell you, once for all, what I want, what I have wanted for many years—ah, yes! longed for as no other woman has ever longed for anything, for no woman's world has ever meant anything to me. You accused me just now of feeling contempt for all human relations. Well, it is, in a great measure, true. I am not one to be attracted by second-rate emotions, or by the various sensations which you sentimental people call love—filial love, parental love, love "*tout court*." I need not enumerate them all, even you must know what I mean! I never could comprehend such idiocy. What

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is life to most women but an ugly, degrading succession of days and nights, shackled, enslaved, and cursed? And all because every woman's ambition turns towards love, or the pretence of love, towards social successes, luxury, a grand marriage, or, if she be so inclined, towards children that are first mere playthings and afterwards become tyrants!"

Her face changed suddenly, as the face of one might change who passes from the first exultation of success to the fruition of long-deferred hope. She gazed down at him with unseeing eyes, her hand dropped from his shoulder, and it seemed as if his cowering figure and gray, drawn face had slipped from her consciousness, as things no longer of consequence or meaning. To the submissive Emperor there was something almost appalling in this visible union between the evident activity of her soul and the marble-like inactivity of her body; her silence seemed unnatural, worse than speech, and it brought additional distress to his overstrained nerves, without, however, lessening that curious and weird fascination she exercised over him. After a moment she resumed, still without appearing to see him, and in a slow, meditative voice, as if thinking now aloud rather than addressing him.

"Women! what are they—even those whom one calls great—but creatures of the moment, beings whom a mere grain of dust may blind, who are bred to smother hate under smiles and disgust under compliments, who are broken in early youth to the full hypocrisies of human life, and who, as a rule, are governed by purely sensual motives? What were Catherine of Russia, Cleopatra, Marguerite of Burgundy, Elizabeth of England, and their like, but slaves to their impulses, endlessly dissatisfied, unreliable, untrustworthy, unable to conquer themselves or to lead others, except by cruelty!"

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Then her eyes flashed into life again.

"I am not ruled by what fills up other women's lives, by hand touching hand, or lips touching lips, by the perfume of a flower or by the state of the weather. I do not exist to fill other women with envy or to capture men. Thank God, I am made differently! My desires have nothing in common with theirs. My one ambition, my only one, is power, as you say, but not for myself! No, not that, but for the boy whom, ever since his birth, I have fashioned with my own hands to be a king. My conception of the nobility of human nature cannot be said to be absurdly high, but a king must be *sans reproche*, free from all the ordinary tinsel of modern royalty, its shams, its pretences, and its small, narrow, sordid views. Austria needs such a king to drag her from the gutter of anarchy and revolution, where you and your predecessors have criminally allowed her to fall. No, do not interrupt me! You are a tricky egotist, without a thought that is not concentrated upon self. You have always considered yourself too good for the wear and tear of real sovereignty!"

The faintest little quiver of revolt showed itself in Ferdinand's eyes, but she silenced him with a peremptory wave of her slim, authoritative hand, and continued:

"You have completely ignored your sacred responsibilities. Such meekness as yours is, in a monarch, an absolutely contemptible virtue, for some people call meekness a virtue, do they not? To yield, out of sheer lack of spirit, has been your usual principle throughout. Your rule—one should hardly call it that—has been a grotesque farce, with, added to it, since a year, a dangerous element of tragedy, and during it you have never accomplished anything for the good of your people, but only infinite harm by your insane neglect and pusillanimity."

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Her mouth was twisted with contempt, her voice had become harsh and grating while pronouncing her inexorable judgment.

The Emperor shuffled his feet in a manner suggestive of increasing discomfort, his dull eyes beginning to blink, as eyes do in dazzling sunshine.

"You want me to abdicate in favor of your son?" he said, suddenly, in a trembling voice. "Why do you not say so?"

For just an instant Archduchess Sophia started in obvious surprise. Was her Imperial dummy about to behave like an intelligent being and spare her any further effort?

"Is not that what you want?" he asked again, in his thin, high-pitched, querulous voice.

"That is ex-act-ly what I want," she replied, slowly and deliberately.

But Ferdinand was not quite as malleable as she had hoped. He fidgeted and writhed under her scrutinizing gaze, his face twitching fantastically and tears actually rising in his lack-lustre eyes.

"I can't do it, Sophia, indeed I cannot. Think of my deserting the throne when it is menaced—of showing the white feather! Think of the ridicule—the—the baseness of it! I may be a weak and worthless man, as you say, but this I cannot do; it would be like seeing hell through its open doors!"

The Archduchess's face whitened and her straight brows ominously lowered over her eyes.

"You miserable wretch!" she cried, shaking from head to foot in uncontrollable passion. "What idiotic *volte-face* is this, after living a life of utter, remorseless selfishness, during which all the manhood you ever possessed has dwindled away to nothing? What insanity has overtaken you to propose playing the part of a man now,



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not to mention that of a sovereign? Do you imagine that I will allow your still-born scruples to interfere with the fulfilment of my boy's destiny? Do you fancy that I will let the monarchy be killed by your feeble attempts to retain a hold upon what is left of it?"

She bent lower to scan his ashen cheeks, which looked as if they would be as cold to the touch as those of a corpse.

"You are," she resumed, keeping her eagle glance upon him, and with a ring of sarcasm in her voice terrible in its cold intensity—"you are a fit person to hold the reins of a runaway chariot of state, are you not? A nice yellow image to waken from your reptilian lethargy now—now that it is too late!"

The Emperor gazed at her with almost animal fear, like a poor, crouching dog "begging off" from punishment, but it was only too evident that she had no intention of relenting. With a pitiful effort he succeeded in controlling himself for a moment, then shame, humiliation, and the violence of change mastered him, and with a groan he hid his face in his hands.

An almost tangible silence reigned for a moment, broken only by the fresh murmur of the fountains tossed by a rising breeze. Then, in her ordinary calm and commanding voice, the Archduchess resumed:

"You shall recall Franz at once! He has received his baptism of fire, he has showed the metal he is made of, and there is no longer any reason for him to"—she had almost said "endanger his life," but checked herself and said "remain absent" instead. "The strong hand of youth, integrity, and fearlessness can alone arrest the course of events; therefore you will arrange everything as secretly and quietly as possible for your abdication. I do not intend to have this matter discussed *en famille*, it is always best to keep one's family at arm's-length!

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Not even the Empress is to know about it as yet. She is an excellent creature, a dear, good soul, but she is entirely at the mercy of her father-confessor, and I desire to avoid complications. I do not ask you to lie about the matter, because a lie is always a mistake. Simply refrain from talking. I am not of a diplomatic turn of mind, but diplomacy is an elastic word, and the greatest diplomacy of all is to hold one's tongue. In conclusion, let me add, that should you in any way play me false, be it ever so slightly, I have means to force you into obedience!"

The Emperor rose to his feet. He was still very white, and there were dark rings around his eyes—he confessed afterwards that the very sound of his sister-in-law's voice had given him a sensation of actual nausea! There were beads of perspiration on his forehead, he cleared his throat as if he were suffering from a cold, and fidgeted about as if desperately anxious to escape.

"Is that all," he asked—"all you really require of me?"

She did not answer. Her gown rustled slightly as she straightened herself to her full height.

He cleared his throat again. "Is that all?" he repeated.

"Yes, provided you promise what I ask, and keep that promise, I think it is all; but promise you must!"

She spoke determinedly, and his face became distorted with an expression of absolute loathing as she bent towards him. Then he replied, reluctantly and in a manner calculated to inspire serious doubts as to his sincerity:

"I promise."

"Unstable as water," she exclaimed, piercing him with her keen, comprehending eyes. "But I think that this time you will follow the line of the least resistance by holding to your word."



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Then, with a slight bow, she walked rapidly away, leaving him beaten and humiliated, his colorless features transformed into a vehement mask of grief, hatred, and impotent rage; undignified, almost absurd, and rocking to and fro, as if about to fall.

### CHAPTER III

EMPEROR FERDINAND, when confronted by forces that daunted him—for to others he opposed a monolithic inertia—was, morally speaking, very like a hollow rubber ball, yielding and soft, but extremely difficult to permanently impress. Archduchess Sophia had applied force, and with such energy as to momentarily impair the Imperial elasticity, but there remained still an almost undiminished power of rolling, rebounding, and executing resilient evasions of various kinds, and though her threat of enforcing obedience was not by any means an idle one, yet great things take time in doing, and to push a monarch from his throne judiciously, and with due regard to surrounding circumstances of a somewhat chaotic nature, must be reckoned among these.

Ferdinand, while incapable of defending it, prized his Imperial dignity as none but utterly selfish men can prize any of the so-called good things of this life, as none but insignificant men can prize a purely fortuitous distinction, and now that the possibility of losing the throne stared him in the face, he only clung the tighter to it.

As a consequence, if he had passed his existence disagreeably before, he now lived in a veritable Inferno. Wildly suspicious of everything and everybody, his whole attitude was that of one continually expectant of some outrage, his eyes restlessly searched his *entourage*, half defiant, incessantly watching, fearful of neglect, or of any sign that his secret was known, and that any one

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should see that his sceptre was passing away from him.

In the meanwhile, the indomitable Archduchess bided her time, confident that her hand held the master card, and keeping him under the surveillance of an eye that sent a chilly thrill through him every time he encountered its penetrating glance.

Events moved rapidly onward, however, towards the realization of her schemes. Less than two weeks after the memorable interview in the "Gloriette," the Emperor and several members of the Imperial family, including, of course, the Archduchess, removed from the surcharged atmosphere of Vienna to loyal Tyrol, and settled at Innsbruck. This was not exactly a flight, but a "prudent step" on the part of a man too sick of body and of heart to offer effective resistance.

After feebly attempting for a time to direct affairs from this secure retreat, the Emperor wearied even of this shred of sovereignty, and sent Archduke John to Vienna, giving him full vice-regal powers. Unfortunately, there was another viceroy in Hungary, as independent of the Viennese representative as the latter was of him, so that with the weak central authority thus divided between two mutually hostile sections of the country, the people drank deep of the first and most inalienable of the rights of freemen, more dear even than "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," that of quarrelling at large, violently, and indiscriminately.

German and Czech, Pole and Italian, Magyar, Slovák, and Croat, all pursued their racial and provincial interests without the slightest possible regard for the integrity of the Empire. Prague lay in ruins after a fierce bombardment and several days of desperate street-fighting, and while Hungary stood ready to fight both the Slavs and the Imperial authority, Jellachich, Ban of Croatia,

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summoned an assembly of Croatian leaders to concert measures both against the Emperor and the Hungarians. Truly the apple of discord had begun to roll merrily on!

Archduke Franz had, much to his disgust, been recalled from the Italian war soon after his mother had dictated that measure to his uncle, and spent a restless two months among the mountains striving vainly—since his whole heart and soul were far away upon the plains of Lombardy—to interest himself in the scenes and sports which he had loved so well and which had never failed him before.

When at length the Emperor tardily decided to revisit Vienna, and to take up his residence at Schönbrunn, he accompanied him there, glad to be so much nearer to the scene of events, even if he were not allowed to take in them the part for which he longed, even if he were but exchanging the quiet of the hills for the calm still lingering on the edge of the storm.

There was nothing about the grand old Imperial residence to remind one of the neighborhood of that unruly Kaiserstadt, where now raged such a *melée* of racial and social strife. Everything that met the eye bespoke it a “haunt of ancient peace”; vision ranged restfully over the low terraces with their broad flights of shallow marble steps and ivy-mantled balustrades, drowsy gardens, heavy with fragrant odors, dazzling with a profusion of magnificent bloom, great groups of velvet-boughed Siberian pines spreading tentlike over emerald lawns, *corbeilles* wherein the flowers of Africa and India arrayed themselves in beauty, and deep defiles of luxuriant foliage through which glittered the tall jets of the fountains; the laughing voice of the waters and the joyous songs of many birds, alone disturbing the summer silence that hung golden over all.

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In Archduke Franz all this loveliness touched no responsive chord; to him the splendid gates of Schönbrunn were as the four walls of a prison. He was no longer a boy, for though not yet quite eighteen—his birthday fell on the 18th of August—he was a man grown, he had lived within the circle of that fierce light which beats upon a throne, and been prematurely ripened by all the forcing influences that dwell there. Already he had known warfare, danger, the leadership of men, the pleasures of duty well done, the intoxication of applause; and he cursed his present inaction while blood flowed on every side, while there were fights to be fought, and swords to follow the hoofs of his charger. With a hundred heroic dreams surging in his brain, he fretted inwardly, as a high-mettled horse frets at the martingale hampering its every movement, and sank deeper and deeper each day in the reserve and moodiness of hope deferred.

For the first time in her life Archduchess Sophia almost regretted a step taken by her, for during this period of inaction the young Archduke fell once more under the spell of the woman who had been the primary cause of his joining Radetzky's army.

To this headstrong beauty the conquest of the cold, proud, self-reliant boy, who had once already escaped her wiles, had become a burning question of unsatisfied vanity, almost of baffled malice. She was in the most perfect years of her youth, at the height of her matchless loveliness, she had not a wish she could not instantly gratify, and her slender, arched foot was irretrievably pressed down upon the neck of the great Viennese world. She ruled it as she listed. Moreover, she was thoroughly aware of her power, and of the fact that the sceptre of great physical beauty and the skill of a born tactician were hers, and therefore did not doubt

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that thus armed she could vanquish both the Imperial youth and his imperious mother.

Alas! of what avail is it for us to erect our sand castles for attack or defence when any chance blast of fate may blow them to nothing? Life hinges upon hazard, and at every turn wisdom or folly are mocked by it; so at least both Archduchess Sophia and her fair antagonist were fated to speedily discover.

It must be confessed that the lady played her cards with amazing cleverness. Her low, sweet whisperings, the gleam of her luminous eyes, with their dangerous eloquence, her thrilling, musical voice, and crystalline, tantalizing laugh, all were brought into play with extreme felicity, and last, but not least, the irresistible mournfulness which has already been mentioned, and which at times gave so winsome a droop to the heavily fringed lids of her dark eyes, thrilled her chivalrous young admirer with ardent and perilous sympathy and pity.

Archduke Franz's strength had as yet, of course, the polish of steel that has never been dimmed, and he thought himself quite secure, believing, as all very young men do, that he could handle fire without feeling the flame—a complete self-confidence not without its own grandeur, but bound to find itself mistaken ninety-nine times out of every hundred.

She drew him on and on; the real instinct, the true pleasure of this soft, exquisite creature being, after all, cruelty and the satisfaction of her every whim, and he, whenever he was in her presence, showed by the very darkening of his eyes, the lowered gentleness of his voice, that, as day followed day, his enslavement grew more and more complete, and that her toils were being drawn tighter and tighter about him.

It was not alone Archduchess Sophia who writhed and fumed as she watched this fascination of a boy, so gentle



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of nature, so true of honor, so strong, and so frank, and, in one word, so different from others, by the most capricious of coquettes; for all those who loved him thought alike on the subject, none daring, however, to warn him, save one alone who rushed in where angels might have been afraid to tread.

Prince Richard Metternich was too young as yet to have been influenced by life, which, to a greater or lesser extent makes egotists and dissemblers of us all, and had so far quite escaped its corrosion. He loved Archduke Franz like a brother, nay more than any of his (Franz's) brothers loved him — for they were by now becoming gradually estranged from him by the slowly growing jealousy I have already alluded to.

The bond between young Prince Metternich and his future sovereign was a close and firmly riveted one and their attachment to each other so uncommon that "Richard Goldenherz" ("the golden-hearted," as he was called by his comrades), although himself a boy of barely nineteen, considering that it would be but a wretched friendship that would shirk the truth when its telling was needed, went straight to the enamoured Heir-Apparent and coolly took him to task upon a subject no man in his senses thinks it prudent or wise to touch upon to another.

Moreover, this wiseacre, yet in his teens, far from mincing matters, spoke out his mind roundly, and declared unblushingly and in the most decisive fashion that the all-conquering lady of his thoughts was "a panther with merciless claws," "a capricious witch, scattering coquetries broadcast, and making her unfortunate husband ridiculous," and, in one word, attributed to her all the wanton treachery of a social Circe, playing unscrupulously and matchlessly with the hearts and lives of men.

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Franz listened to him with ominous tranquillity, and, when at last the impetuous flood of words ceased, informed his self-appointed mentor that even "old friendship" may be officious and impertinent, that the office of moral censor sat very ill on so inexperienced a counsellor, that attentions to young married women were not by any manner of means uncommon transgressions in gay Vienna, and that by this and by that—as the Irish put it—his (Richard's) virtue, need not be alarmed, since the lady under discussion was not at all what he supposed her to be, but an angel of purity and innocence, enduring with admirable and extraordinary fortitude her most miserable lot.

The poor counsellor, totally routed and deeply hurt when he found that his excellently meant advice was so ill-received, crept away to nurse his wounds in solitude, while Franz, stung to madness by words which had unwittingly heaped fuel on the flame, began to be certain that there remained for him on earth nothing worth heeding, remembering, or caring for, but that one slender, graceful being who had shackled him, as in gyves of iron, with the silky locks of her yellow hair.

That very night there was a demi-gala dinner at Schönbrunn on the occasion of some birthday or anniversary, and, in spite of Archduchess Sophia's protests, "Archduke Franz's Siren"—as the enchanting *blonde aux yeux noirs* was now designated—was present, looking more enticing and more than ever determined to conquer.

With her glittering hair crowned by the velvety blue of priceless sapphires, her exquisite form shrouded but not in any way concealed by clouds of snow-white gauzes light as morning mists, and her dark eyes gleaming with mischief, she seemed to have set her will upon making her beauty more than mortal, in order to goad

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him until he was utterly her bond-slave, "*pied et poings liés*." His eyes followed her with a look of admiration which she fanned to fire by glances of superhuman witchery, or by the mere sweep of her dress across his feet. To arouse and then play with the self-contained nature of her Imperial prize was a *régale de déesse* for this voluptuous coquette, and certainly on that night she surpassed herself and mastered him as Vivien did her lover under the murmuring foliage of Broceliande.

Perchance, the only compensation which the revolutionary climax offered was that it put yet another temporary end to this perilous game, else, like Antony, forgetting all for his Queen's blandishments, the young Archduke might have been sore tempted to leave his shield for foes to mock at, his sword to rust, and his honor to drift away while he lay lapped in the love of a worthless woman. But all was not yet over between those two, alas! and more was to follow when graver cares than those of love and passion lulled a little around the young Emperor that was to be.

September was on the wane, and autumn drew near, heralded by a glory of heliotrope and "Louise de Savoie" roses, which filled the old park with exquisite fragrance, when alarming intelligence arrived. Hungary had already broken loose, Kossuth was dictator, and swiftly on the heels of these heavy blows came the news that Count Lamberg, hurrying to take the chief command of the Imperial troops in the revolted kingdom, which had just been intrusted to his strong, firm hands, had been met by a mob upon the bridge at Buda-Pesth, and brutally hacked to pieces with scythes and spades. A week later the seismic wave had radiated to Vienna itself, as to a volcano which for a long time has muttered and threatened unheeded, so that the 6th of October was rendered memorable by an explosion that not only

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numbered among its many victims the Minister of War, Count Baillet de Latour, but sent Emperor Ferdinand galloping as fast as his horses could drag him from the vicinity of his raging capital.

A day or so before the outbreak, having been asked to authorize a scheme for quelling the vehemence and turbulence of his good burghers by force of arms, the Emperor, who, though irresolute and broken in health and spirit, was by no means devoid of the hereditary Habsburg courage, ordered his carriage, and, accompanied only by one aide-de-camp, proceeded to drive through the concourse of violently excited people thronging the Leopoldstadt, the Josephstadt, and all those thoroughfares which had been reported to him as most dangerous.

Of course, what was bound to take place happened, for the Viennese, loyal at heart, in spite of their overheated heads and seething rancors, and always disposed to make much of their Emperors, as soon as they caught sight of Ferdinand leaning carelessly back in his victoria and accompanied merely by an aide-de-camp, began to cheer him enthusiastically. Naturally this delighted the monarch, and upon his return he declared, with a chuckle, and in the popular dialect invariably spoken by the Imperial family and the aristocracy:

*"I' auf mane guten Wianer Schiessen! Gar Ka' Red; die san ja mane liaben kinder!"*

(I shoot my good Viennese? Not a bit of it. They are my own dear children.)

Thus absolutely deceived by the expressions of an almost instinctive sentiment of affection for the ruler, Ferdinand was thrown into a correspondingly severe confusion and consternation when Count Latour fell a victim to the obstinately conciliatory Imperial policy, and, absolutely at his wit's end, he could think of no

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better move than his lamentably ill-advised flight to the Moravian fortress of Olmütz.

The maintenance of order in the capital had been intrusted to the National Guards, a militia for the most part disaffected, and to the Academic Legion, a student corps frequently designated in its political aspect—which was insanely inflammatory and seditious—as the “Aula,” from the fact of its holding meetings in the hall of the University. Troops of the line to the number of some twelve thousand men, under Count Auersperg, were scattered about the suburbs of the city.

The students earnestly desired “freedom,” and this they could find according to their notions only under a republican régime. Desirous of doing away with the existing form of government, they naturally hated and feared the War Minister of a constitutional monarchy, who, moreover, was a man renowned for courage and energy, and lost no opportunity of making him a scapegoat for all the evils, real or imaginary, that they considered the people were suffering. They worked actively for his overthrow among the ignorant populace, denouncing him in inflammatory speeches at tavern meetings or street assemblages, and, even within the precincts of the University itself, circulating placards demanding vengeance for his alleged misdeeds, and inspiring newspaper cartoons against him. Finally, a few days before the outbreak, when a large part of the National Guard and the proletariat were convinced that Latour was really a monster, deserving of even worse than death, they worked themselves up to the point of declaring that he should be hanged.

Nor was the match to fire the train long wanting. Troops from the capital had been ordered to proceed against the Hungarians, for whom, as rebels against the government, the malcontents had a fellow-feeling, and a



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certain grenadier battalion, long quartered amid metropolitan delights, had no desire to go to the front, and accordingly fraternized with the disaffected portion of the populace and the National Guard.

On the night of the 5th of October a deputation of National Guards waited upon the War Minister, asking that the battalion should not be dispatched from the city. Latour referred the request, as a matter beyond his immediate decision, to the military commander, Count Auersperg, who, of course, refused it, and directed that a force of cavalry should be on hand to insure the obedience of the recalcitrant grenadiers.

The National Guard and the "Aula" could not tamely submit to this new exhibition of "arbitrary" power. Delegations went out to the suburbs, under cover of darkness, and worked to such effect that by the following morning a section of the railway over which the troops were to be sent had been torn up, and a barricade, manned by a strong force, erected on the bridge across which it was necessary for them to march. In a few hours, when an attempt to force the passage of the bridge had resulted in the desertion to the populace of the mutinous grenadiers, and in the sanguinary defeat of the attacking column by overwhelming numbers, the whole city was aflame with excitement, for was not tyranny again at her work of crushing the liberties of free-men? While the military hesitated, and their commander rushed off for a consultation to the War Office, whither many ministers, deputies, and officers of the National Guard had already betaken themselves with a similar intent, heated orators harangued tumultuous crowds in the streets, gunsmiths' shops were looted for weapons, frothing students rushed from house to house directing that boiling water and boiling oil be kept in readiness to cast from the upper windows, and barri-



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cares rose as if by magic across the principal thoroughfares.

Meanwhile, from the War Office, orders were issued to put down by main force the armed resistance in the suburbs, and some pacificatory proclamations to the people, who were now beyond all pacification, were made. Outside the city there was a collision between a detachment of the Academic Legion and the Government forces; inside, the loyal section of the National Guard, while attempting to prevent the sounding of the tocsin, was attacked by the mutinous majority, aided by the mob, and driven in a bloody rout into the great cathedral church of St. Stephen, where they barricaded and defended themselves with the greatest valor.

Count Latour now made the first of his magnanimous mistakes. The guard of the War Office, in the heart of this rebellious city, consisted of little more than four companies of infantry; but on hearing how the loyal militia were besieged in the church he sent three companies and two cannon to their relief, thus decreasing his available force to about two hundred men. The officer in command was under orders to return for the protection of the War Office as soon as he had accomplished his mission; but the mob had by now increased to such overpowering numbers that not only was the retreat of his forces cut off, and they compelled to escape by whatever route offered, but a battalion of infantry sent from the army without, to insure the safety of Count Latour, was attacked so fiercely from all sides and from the windows of the houses that it retired in confusion.

Then the mob surged up to the gates of the War Office. Cut off and beleaguered on every side, Count Latour had disposed his little garrison for a siege, fastening the great front gates, barricading the rear doors, and disposing his men for the defence of the windows.

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It was a strange sight that the gray-headed soldier looked down upon. Below surged and swayed a terrible human sea, roaring and howling with a ferocity that frequently blended all words and individual cries into one heart-shaking whirlwind of sound. There was a bubbling foam of open-mouthed faces, those strangely, inconceivably villainous and brutal types that seem for years, for centuries even, to hide in the cellars and sewers of a great city, and to creep forth in dark times like these, when Cruelty and Horror are abroad; while here and there burst up from the weltering commotion a spray of naked arms, brandishing crowbars, cudgels, lengths of lead pipe, pikes, axes, hammers, cutlasses, and a motley array of weapons captured from the defeated soldiery or looted from the shops of the city.

Now and again the dark waves broke apart, showing for an instant, before they rushed together again, individual forms, insane atoms that went to form the total of this hideous flood, figures in the uniforms of the National Guard, the Academic Legion, the mutinous grenadier battalion, laborers, thieves, murderers from the slums, market-women shrieking as ferociously as their Parisian sisters of 1793, and not infrequently well-dressed people, whose respectable appearance was somewhat contradicted by the furtive way in which they slipped about and threaded their way among the press. These were the agents of various political societies, the walking delegates of revolution, dropping a word here, urging there, advising everywhere, avoiding active participation as far as possible, but pushing on the maddened throng to deeds of blood. The yells and cries now rose in a full-throated tempest, and now broke and scattered in hoarse, individual vociferations, culminating always in one terrifying shriek of "Death to Latour!

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Down with the tyrant! *Nieder mit dem Hund.* Hang him! Hang him!"

Many times during the immediately preceding days the War Minister had been warned that his life was in danger. He had shrugged his shoulders then, he shrugged them now, as he listened to these roars of menace, and coolly surveyed this packed mass of human wild beasts thirsting for his blood. Below in the court-yard his one cannon was pointed at the great doors, which groaned and thundered to the assault without; behind it stood the gunners, steady at their post, waiting the command to fire; on either side was a solid column of grenadiers with fixed bayonets, their officers at their head. Every time the doors seemed to yield or buckle to a fresh blow, he could see the men start and lean forward, like eager hounds with the quarry in sight, waiting for the slipping of the leash.

What would happen when that gate did finally burst open was before the minister's inward eye. The crashing discharge, the canister at that terribly short range cutting a ghastly lane of death through the dense masses without, the ordered charge of disciplined troops passing over that maddened herd, the flight, the shrieking and the slaughter of women and children. A well-timed sortie of even so small a force might disperse the cowardly mob, and, on the other hand, if the grenadiers were beaten back, he could at least defend the building until help should arrive. The orders were given. Should he swiftly countermand them before it was too late? At any moment the gate might give way. He felt that he had already leaned too much towards conciliation; besieged and threatened, he had not yet fired a shot in defence, when to defend himself seemed the only soldierly—nay, common-sense thing to do. And yet there were his instructions from the Emperor. Should he risk it? Should

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he make one more trial for a peaceful solution of the trouble? His eye glanced again over the impenetrable press of ignorance and blind fury outside, and he smiled in pitying contempt.

A shattering blow from without and a crash in the court-yard announced that a portion of the gate had been driven in. With one stride the minister was at the window.

"Don't fire! Don't fire!" he cried to the troops below. "Throw open the gates!"

"Let them come in, I will speak to them!" he said, turning impatiently to the deputies and ministers who surrounded him, and were trying to reason with him.

An aide-de-camp ran down with orders. At once the threatening muzzle of the gun was swung around, and as the dismayed and disheartened soldiers drew back, the gates opened, and the dammed-up flood swept through the portal with a roar. It was the rush of besiegers through a breach, not by any means the advance of a populace impressed by the War Minister's frank, manly, and heroic display of confidence.

Quickly he himself saw his fatal mistake, but, alas! no opportunity was given him to retrieve his position. Almost immediately the people thundered through the corridors, drunk with rage and triumph, shrieking again loudly for his blood. Gaining the stairway from the now thoroughly demoralized soldiers set to guard them, they swarmed through the upper stories of the building, battering in the doors, hurling the furniture and equipment of the rooms through the windows into the street, plundering or destroying with insensate brutality everything that came in their way. There was no time to be lost.

Urging the ministers and others who offered him assistance to look to their own safety, Count Latour, at-

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tended by his aide-de-camp and several officers of the army, ascended to the top story to seek a way of escape.

The minutes passed. Drunken fury, unimaginably disgusting and horrible to behold, reigned in the War Office. There were many ring-leaders but no leader, and the search for the hated Latour appeared to be degenerating into a mere orgy of robbery and wanton violence, when loud shouts arose without, and those craning from the windows could see a white flag slowly forcing a passage through the dense crowd towards the gate. A deputation had arrived from the National Diet for the protection of the War Minister!

Slowly pushing their way up the packed staircase, now thrust upward by a rush from below, now forced down by a torrent from above, the deputies at length encountered some of Count Latour's companions, who, despairing of escape, had prevailed upon him to seek concealment while they scouted through the building for possible assistance; and they in their blindness contrived that the deputies should reach the Count. Swift consultations followed in an isolated chamber, while the tumult sounded all about, lost in the labyrinth of rooms and corridors. Count Latour's resignation was urged upon him, and granted by that stout old soldier, who conceded for the restoration of peace what he would not for his own safety; but even this failed to pacify the hordes that were by now storming towards the doors of the apartment in which he was, clamoring to see him, and threatening even the lives of the mediators if he did not show himself at once. The resignation as written was made conditional upon the approval of the Emperor; but though the deputies repeatedly protested that this would be a fatal objection, Count Latour would not have it otherwise.

Nevertheless the people's representatives still had con-



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fidence in their official influence. Pledging their protection to the Count, they again faced the pikes and crowbars, declaring that he should be arrested in due form for trial and impeachment, but demanding as a condition that a guard be selected who would swear to defend him to the death. Twenty-five men, workmen, students, and National Guards, came forward and solemnly took the oath; a moment later the door opened and Latour stepped out into the corridor, calmly, as if about to assume the chair at some great assemblage.

"I am here, *meine Kinder*," he said, quietly, "a man of honor, with a clear conscience, does not fear either bayonets or daggers. You have offered to guard me. I surrender myself into your hands!"

A roar of execration was the only reply. The deputies and the guard closed around him and began to descend the staircase, closely pressed and almost suffocated by the mob. Oaths, yells, and threats of death rang from all sides. Some of the guard endeavored to protect their prisoner, but the most part, animated by the worst intentions and anxious only to prevent his escape, added their voices to the storm of jeers and insults.

Panting, struggling, forcing towards their victim from every direction, the crowd seethed and surged around; hands thrust through the ring of men, plucking and tearing at him; one dashed his hat over his eyes; here and there clenched fists dealt him heavy blows; one man, taller than the rest, leaned over and slashed him across the face with a quadrupled cord, shouting, "This is to hang you with!" and every moment, as they slowly descended towards the court-yard, some defender or deputy was torn from his side and the places filled by implacable monsters, who were rapidly losing even all human semblance in their bestial ferocity.

Shouts of savage welcome greeted the arrival in the



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court-yard of the terrible cortege. "Hang him! Hang him!" roared the mob. Pushed, pulled, struck at, violently passed from hand to hand through a whirl of bristling weapons, his own guard now foremost among the assailants, the unhappy minister was thrust up against the wall. A young officer, greatly devoted to him, Captain Count de Gondrecourt, breaking a way through the maddened throng, flung himself before his chief, vainly defending him with his bare hands, but he was torn off and cast aside, like an importunate child too insignificant to punish, and there was no further protection for Count Latour. One assassin cut at him with a sabre, another struck him a fearful blow with a crowbar; hammers, pikes, bayonets, musket-butts descended upon him. Dashed to the ground by a tempest of blows, trampled by the feet of the mob, and literally torn limb from limb by rending hands, he was yet seen to snatch at a bayonet which was thrust into his thigh. Still living, he was dragged through pools of his own blood and hanged to a window-bar. What was left of his mangled, shredded body fell when the cord broke, and the last spark of life was trodden out by furious market-women, stamping with demoniacal laughter upon that palpitating, mutilated thing, which had been one of God's grandest, noblest creatures.

His clothing, torn to bits already, was collected for souvenirs, handkerchiefs were dipped in his blood, and, until late at night, the naked and hideously mangled trunk swung by the neck from a lamp-post, an object of insult for the populace and a target for the bullets of the National Guard. Thus died an honorable gentleman, whose only offences were his loyalty to his sovereign and his dauntless courage.

At Schönbrunn the consternation was great. All was hurry and bustle for immediate departure. Ferdinand,

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ill and helpless as usual, looked like a beaten child, and avoided the eye of his young nephew, whose ardent soul chafed at the inaction into which he was forced. Poor Archduke Franz! He implored to be allowed to join the troops and throw himself at the throat of that towering spectre of revolution which was having it all its own way at Vienna, and when this request was refused he positively sickened with despair, and with the hungry, unsatisfied desire to fight, and to be of use, instead of sitting at home like a frightened woman.

When, finally, at four o'clock in the morning, the Court departed under strong military escort to take refuge in the fortress of Olmütz, he yielded to his uncle's agonized entreaties and rode beside the Imperial carriage mile after mile in the gray dawn, trying by his presence to reassure and console the broken-spirited old man moaning and muttering prayers on the silken cushions inside.

That terrible journey, in the teeth of a furious storm of wind and rain, remained like some ghastly nightmare upon the mind of Archduke Franz. Water fell in sheets from the leaden skies, hiding the whole landscape and filling the air with masses of gray vapor. In places the road was barely passable, for the smallest brooks had suddenly swollen to regular torrents, sweeping away the grassy banks and turning everything to liquid mud.

As the day advanced the gloom deepened amid an increasing sound of splashing water, that muffled the noise of the carriage-wheels and the stamping of the horses' hoofs. Soon the fog and the darkness compelled the fugitives to advance more cautiously and slowly, so that hours followed hours, and became a long, slow torture to the Emperor, and an unceasing weariness to all those who were with him.

At last the fortress was reached, and the Emperor,

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who for the first time in his life had experienced true discomfort and real, crushing bodily fatigue, broke down completely as he was assisted to alight. In spite of the lateness of the hour the young Archduke seated himself beside the bed whereon his Imperial uncle had hurriedly been placed, and now cowered, lost in lamentation and almost delirious with exhaustion and remorse.

Outside the storm still raged furiously, growing wilder and wilder as the night advanced. The wind beat against the massive walls of the fortress and shrieked like a tortured soul through the endless windings of the stone-flagged passages and corridors, echoes of thunder now and again sounded like salvoes of artillery, while the blue-and-purple glance of lightning shot through the chinks of the thick curtains drawn before the windows. But the tumult in Archduke Franz's heart was far more terrible than that which was abroad over the little township of Olmütz. Vainly he strove to console and comfort his wretched charge, vainly he tried to reason with his own misery and anger! Stiff with fatigue in his chair, scarcely moving, except when he bent over the stricken Emperor to dose him with soothing potions, he felt the torture of a great shame and a great disappointment.

It was his first experience of mental pain, and he imagined that all joy, all hope was being trampled to death within his heart by its intensity, and felt as if years must elapse before strength was once more given to him to gather up his moral courage. His imagination dwelt persistently upon the scenes described by the few imperialists who had witnessed the cowardly assassination of Latour. He saw incessantly a maddened mob tearing and rending the body of that brave soldier whom he had known and loved, and he felt sick, as a man may feel sick at some revolting sight, his flesh shuddered, and he loathed himself for having consented to come away, for

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having shared a flight which he considered as too humiliating to be borne, and degrading beyond anything a monarch could have done. He thought bitterly of Louis XVI. running away from the scaffold, a deed he had always looked upon with contempt, and smothered a curse through his clenched teeth. Why not face danger, risk, peril? Would not certain doom have been far easier to bear than remorse and shame? Why not show a bold front and emulate those other people of the Terror who did *not* run away, and who walked up the slippery, crimsoned steps of the guillotine with smiling lips and challenging, undaunted, unflinching eyes? Why not "*faire son métier de Roy?*"—why not? Ah! why not show this frenzied *canaille* that fear is not numbered among the hereditary vices with which monarchs are credited? Was the Imperial ermine growing too heavy for modern shoulders, were the orb and the sceptre no longer in harmony with the time?

The lad writhed at the thought, and cold perspiration stood thick on his puckered brow. Surely there could not be on the face of the earth a man so weak, so guilty, so pusillanimous as his uncle, he, one of the chief rulers of the world, in whose stewardship the fate of fair lands and loyal peoples had been placed. Was the immensity of his responsibilities only equalled, then, by the boundlessness of his incapacity?—was he fit only to lie secure in a satin-lined shelter? Why had he been selected, pre-ordained to meet with the frightful exigencies of the present situation, he who seemed to appreciate of the throne naught save its soft, velvet upholstery and the immunities it gave him? What would become of the monarchy, aye, of the country itself, in such palsied hands?

To the young man keeping vigil through the watches of that appalling night, the power and might and glory of the House of Habsburg had, since the cradle, been a

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religion, a creed, a faith. He was certainly not ambitious for himself, but he burned to give all the years of his life to the service of the monarchy created by Rudolph I. so many centuries ago, and which had been ever a proud and a noble one.

"*L'Etat, c'est moi!*" would never be his maxim, but he was beyond measure resentful and infuriated when his eyes fell upon the man shivering on the bed beside the chair where he himself writhed with humiliation, and who went many steps further than that and cared apparently not a straw what became of the State so long as he, the Emperor, need sacrifice not a whit of his comfort or peace in screening it from harm. What a cruel, senseless thing was destiny!

Again he glanced at the tear-flushed face upon the lace-bordered pillows, and as he did so he drew a long breath of relief, for Ferdinand at last was asleep. A ray from the night-lamp fell upon the swollen features, showing the still trembling mouth and nervously quivering eyelids.

Very softly the self-appointed nurse drew the gold-brocaded bed-curtain between the sleeper and the faint, rosy light, and was on the point of retreating on tip-toe from the room, when a small side door noiselessly unclosed and his mother entered. She was very pale, and there was a suggestion of a tremor about her firm lips. She went a step nearer to him, the folds of her loose gown of soft, white wool trailing noiselessly on the thick carpet.

"Come!" she whispered. Her imperious manner was a little less so than usual, perchance there was a tiny suspicion of tremor in her lowered voice, too. He obeyed eagerly, and followed her through the dimly lighted passages to her own apartments, where shaded lamps and great baskets of mountain-flowers, placed there by



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her orders—for she, too, in her cold, strange, unemotional way, loved all the blossoms that bloom, and was seldom without some fragrant cluster or bouquet about her—relieved the severity of the tapestried walls and stiff furniture of carved ebony and palisander. She signed to him to sit down, and with the caressing grace she used with him alone, and that but rarely, she tilted his face upward and looked into his eyes; but much of the impotent rage which had racked him during the past hours still lingered in their blue depths, and he rose abruptly, as if dreading her scrutinizing gaze.

The Archduchess understood very well the strife which went on in his soul, the impulse for expression which could scarcely be resisted, and which would, if yielded to, lay his innermost feelings bare to her, and also the iron restraint he was endeavoring to keep upon himself touched a certain chord in her mind, a certain pulse in her heart, as nothing else could have done. She motioned him back to his chair.

“Franz, hear me a moment,” she said, in a low tone, through which there ran an unwonted thrill of passionate tenderness. “You have long known that the Crown of the Habsburgs is to be yours; lately you have been in a position to judge how ill your uncle can cope with his almost insurmountable difficulties, and although you have concealed it well, yet I have noticed how immeasurable is your scorn for his weakness!” For a fleeting instant a gleam of admiration passed into her eyes. “You are now a man in the full acceptance of the word,” she continued, pride vibrating in her every accent, “and I will force your uncle to abdicate in your favor, to relinquish into your hands the reins of government he is incapable of wielding; for you, and you alone, can save Austria!”

As she spoke, a vivid, palpitating, intoxicating hope



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slowly dawned in the boy's eyes. He foresaw in a flash all the loss of freedom, of "*joie de vivre*," which would be entailed on him by the assumption of the weighty Dual Crown; he realized that as his uncle's successor his future would be neither peaceful nor easy; but the hot, hope-inspiring blood of youth was surging madly in his veins and rendered him willing to set no limits to the sacrifices which his Imperial duties would exact from him. He loathed the *veulerie* of the times, and longed for the means to prove that the old, fearless, high-handed, single-hearted, loyal, and pure devotion to duty, which sees in the whole teeming universe but one task to accomplish and but one straight and worthy way of accomplishing it, lived still in the breast of at least one monarch.

The evanescent breath of his noble purpose passed like the cool breeze of an April morn, sweet with the scent of meadow blossoms, across the stormy, passion-heated atmosphere of the room, and seemed to influence the Archduchess's meditations, for her next sentence was colored by his thoughts more than by her own, as if she had listened to his silence.

"Yes," she said, gently, "you will be a great Emperor, my son. You will show the world what a monarch can be, and what infinite good he can work for his people, but"—and here she hesitated a little—"in order to achieve this you must not throw down your heart like a naked, trembling, panting thing, to be played with and trampled upon by that very world. You are just now under the influence of a great exaltation and ready to give freely all your future, to fling away all personal interest for the honor and preservation of your House, and to ask nothing more of earth and heaven than to fully and brilliantly accomplish this heavy task. That vision of what may be dazzles you as the mirage of a

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green oasis blinds the desert pilgrim, but I, with chillier prescience, can, alas, foresee the weariness behind the charm, and the heaviness of the yoke you are about to assume."

This momentary compassion, this apparent desire to draw him back on the very brink of resolve, was, perchance, the cleverest thing which that extraordinarily clever woman had ever done. To demurely point out to the enthusiastic, excited boy, difficulties and obstacles, was, in his present mood, nothing short of a challenge, an open hint, a doubt as to his steadfastness and power of renunciation, a doubt, she realized perfectly well, that he would not endure, a challenge he would unhesitatingly accept.

He sprang to his feet, his face colorless, his mouth set, and caught her wrist in his cold fingers.

"There is no need," he said, in a low, concentrated voice, "to be afraid for me. You say that His Majesty is willing to abdicate in my favor; let him do so, I am ready to relieve him of his charge now, at once, and to assume all the penalties that go with it!"

A faint, almost imperceptible smile of triumph trembled on the lips of the able king-maker at his side, but he did not notice it, for he was in that state of mental tension where elusive smiles and delicate diplomacy pass unrecognized. His mother had stung and humiliated him profoundly, but he did not know that she had played him as a good angler plays a trout.

He had little vanity, but still he knew himself to be one of those who can carry through a resolve, whatever it is, to the very end without wincing; he knew, also, that he was no mere child to be treated with pitying indulgence and warned of every pitfall. This, too, coming from the only living being who had a real knowledge of him, made his white cheeks suddenly flame with

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mortification, and cast a shadow of perplexity upon his eyes. Had he but been able to see clearly, he would have perceived that his mother was in an absolute ecstasy of pride and delight, surely in itself a startling thing in so cold and self-controlled a woman.

She was intolerant of illusions as a rule, but her son's present illusive mood served her purpose admirably, and, moreover, she, perchance, remembered the old saying which states that "*les illusions sont des zéros, mais c'est avec les zéros qu'on fait les beaux chiffres!*" But now, almost in the moment of her triumph, a keen, unexpected sense of regret arose in her—strange, indeed, in one who having put a hand to the plough never looked backward. Nevertheless, her indescribable air of indifference and disdain suddenly disappeared, and with a gentle, caressing movement she drew him towards her, actuated by this sudden weakness, this sudden yearning and wistful desire that all she had done to secure him the throne had been left unaccomplished, that her boy could still remain all her own, and the kiss she gave him was that of a mere loving, anxious mother. "My own darling!" she murmured.

The words escaped her unawares, and when they were uttered she longed to recall them. This was not the time for demonstrative affection, least of all from a woman such as she; and, straightening herself to her full height and casting off her softer mood with a little shake of the shoulders, habitual to her when she had, as she called it, "caught herself napping," she resumed her explanation, as had this little tender interlude been a trifle beneath notice:

"As I have just told you, I long since approached your uncle on the subject of his abdication; to be exact, I spoke to him very decidedly about the matter last May, when he was still under the impression produced by the

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March riots, and he promised me then"—she halted imperceptibly—"to make this sacrifice for the sake of the country's safety. Since that time I have continually held this promise before his eyes, and the events of the last few days will undoubtedly lead him to fulfil it now."

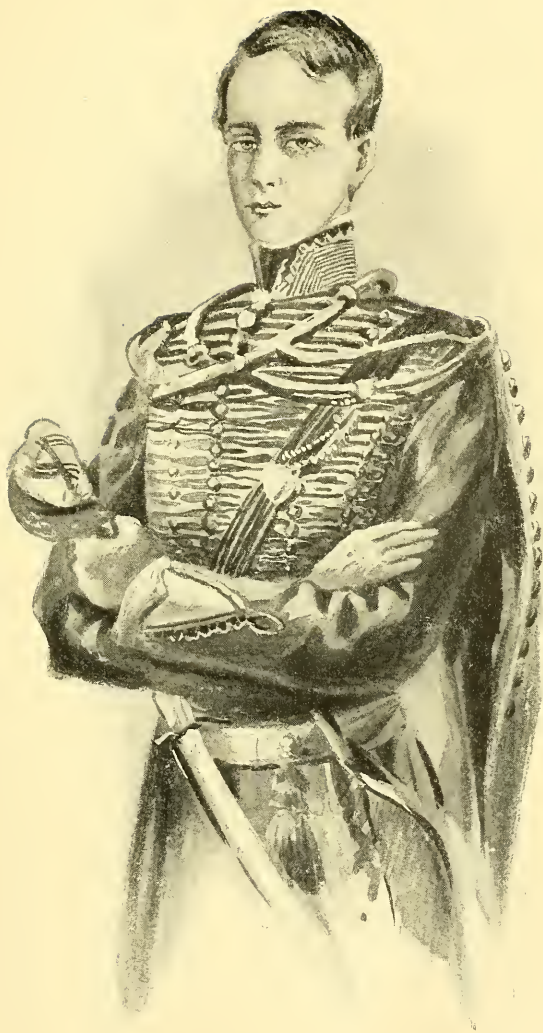
"Did he consider it in the light of a sacrifice?" Archduke Franz said, quietly, and without a hint of sarcasm.

The Archduchess's eyes opened a little wider, but her answer to this inconvenient question was delivered in a perfectly calm and secure tone.

"Oh, you see, no man desires to suffer more keenly than is absolutely necessary, your uncle Ferdinand least of all, and there is no doubt that he has debated the amount of pain to be avoided or endured that hangs in the balance of his decision against or for an abdication; but, taking it all in all, I think that the result of his inward debates is a foregone conclusion."

The young Archduke's powers of self-restraint must just then have amazed even the mother who had instilled them into him. His eyes were fixed steadily upon her, his lips were slightly parted, and his attitude indicated careful attention, but, save for the fact that a few tiny beads of moisture still glistened on his forehead, he gave no sign of agitation or even of unusual interest in what she said. And yet he was being called upon not only to take that active part which he had dreamed of and longed for, but actually to assume full control of affairs, and to shoulder responsibilities a great deal heavier than those which had staggered and unseated the great Metternich himself! But after the first flush of surprise, called forth by news he had never even suspected and for which he was totally unprepared, he betrayed neither qualms nor enthusiasms. This, indeed, was a man!

Youth has a cunning magic peculiar and enviable



FRANCIS-JOSEPH IN 1848





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which can be replaced by nothing else in the world, for it grants its possessor a quick and kaleidoscopic adaptability which makes everything easy in comparison to the inalterable habitude of maturer age. Already, in the instinctive throwing back of the shoulders and holding up of the finely shaped head, this youth, who but a few short minutes before had been a mere unit—more gifted than the rest, it is true—in a numerous Imperial family, a boy exasperated by circumstances, smarting beneath the constraint put upon him by the timorous chief of both his House and his country, already bore himself like a sovereign of twice his years and a hundred times his experience. There was no boastfulness in his attitude, not a trace of pose or of affectation in this curious and immediate outward assumption of responsibility and care; evidently emanating from the fulness of the strongly beating young heart, the swiftly working brain, eager to go at once on duty and to direct the rescue of Crown and Fatherland.

Archduchess Sophia sat still as a statue, her eyes fixed upon him; then she laughed—a soft, victorious laugh.

“Speaking in all moderation,” she declared, “I think that I may rely wholly upon you to be what I have always prayed you should be—a great ruler.”

He looked at her gravely, then smiled and said, very slowly, with an effect supremely impersonal, “I may at least promise you that I will do the uttermost in my power to revive and maintain the Habsburg traditions.”

The Archduchess had slipped an emerald ring from her finger, and was twirling it round in the palm of her hand.

“We have had tawdry imitations on the throne, which were as different from the old Habsburgs as pinchbeck is from gold,” she mused aloud, glancing obliquely at him, “but you are genuine, Franz; thank God for that! since

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your occasion has come at last, and unseen hands are pushing you towards a glorious destiny."

He did not speak, he did not look at her, but he caught his breath audibly, a long, tremulous breath!

Suddenly the Archduchess's pale, grave face leaped into light and color, her eyes blazed, and moved seemingly by an inexplicable impulse—for the silence had apparently remained quite unbroken save by that low, tremulous sigh—she rose swiftly, ran lightly across the room, and, tearing aside the heavy tapestry, bared to view the dark, narrow opening of a sliding door in the wall, and standing within it the cowering figure of no less a personage than Empress Maria-Anna herself.

This was a serious discovery, a terribly embarrassing one at any rate, and Archduke Franz fell back against the tapestried wall with an exclamation of supreme astonishment. Not so Archduchess Sophia, who possessed one of those contradictory natures which never take a situation as one would expect it to be taken, and who, instead of exploiting the dramatic possibilities of the present one at the expense of the enemy, said, with the utmost calmness: "Ah, I thought I heard a rat. Pardon me, my dear, for this unflattering mistake. Pray come in and form one of our little council."

Maria-Anna glanced at her terrible sister-in-law with reproachful, tragic eyes, and would have fled had not the Archduchess prevented this by grasping her hand and leading her gently but inexorably to a chair by the now almost extinguished fire.

Though nominally mistress of all the Imperial palaces of Austro-Hungary, and supposed by the ignorant to lead her weak, vacillating husband by a silken thread, Empress Maria-Anna held both housewifely and wifely reins with a slack hand, and under her management matters had gone hopelessly to the bad in her domain. She had

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nothing in common with the brave, resolute, self-reliant Sophia, of whom she stood in dumb, nameless awe. Indeed, the latter had once or twice spoken such blighting plain truths to Ferdinand's self-indulgent, indolent consort, and presented her with such jagged and uncomfortable "pieces of her mind," that she had been thrown into violent hysterics, and had subsequently implored her lord to send "*diese Sophia*" about her business, and far away from the Hofburg or Schönbrunn. But this was easier said than done, and he knew far too well what manner of an enemy Sophia could become on provocation to even attempt carrying out his wife's tearful wishes.

So the Empress always avoided her autocratic sister-in-law most scrupulously; and when absolutely forced to communicate with her upon private matters, invariably did so through the priestly intervention of her father-confessor, a shrewd and sagacious man, who, she considered, was far more able to cope with her than she herself was.

Now, however, she was face to face with the being she feared most in the world, and under what circumstances! What could the masterful and unforgiving Archduchess mean to do with her? What dire punishment lurked behind that pretence of welcome, that delicately scornful smile, that eye that had "marked her coming, and looked brighter when she came," in spite of the manner of that appearance?

The calm of the dim, sweet-scented old chamber seemed surcharged with menace. Shivering with cold and fright, the wretched Empress bent over the dying embers, feigning to warm her shaking fingers at flames "shining solely by their absence," as the French put it, while the amazed Archduke stood immovable, looking down at the carpet. Archduchess Sophia alone preserved her equanimity as absolutely as if her Imperial sister-in-law

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had merely dropped in for a cheery morning visit, instead of having been thus caught eavesdropping under peculiarly suspicious and inconvenient circumstances.

Sophia sank into a chair facing her, leaned back with careless grace on some cushions, and, gazing mockingly at her, asked, serenely, "Well, now, tell me, my dear, quite frankly, what do you think of our little project?"

Maria-Anna shrank into the utmost corner of her seat, and her frightened, imploring eyes began to dilate with abject terror before her arch-enemy's unexpected and tantalizing gentleness, a sweetness far more terrible to those who knew Sophia well than any of her most violent outbursts would have been.

"Well!" repeated the latter, playing with the tassel of a cushion, her eyes glowing maliciously.

A groan escaped the Empress's white lips.

"Reflect for a moment, if you have not as yet had time to co-ordinate your ideas," continued the merciless Archduchess, assuming a tone wholly argumentative. "The day is young yet, for, lazier than we, the sun still slumbers."

Maria-Anna tried to speak, but in vain; her tongue was cleaving to the roof of her mouth, and with an encouraging smile her tormentor said, in a more and more ominously coaxing manner, "I see! No doubt you would prefer to speak to me alone. Why did not you say so at once?" Then, turning to the worried and puzzled Archduke, she added, softly, "Will you go and wait for me in my bedroom, Franz? I will be with you directly."

He glanced at his mother a little wistfully, as if he did not quite understand or like this move, but he knew her too well to resist, and, bowing low before the Empress, who looked at this moment anything but Imperial or imposing, he went without a word.

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Outside both rain and wind were still raging, and, although it was now past three o'clock, there was not even a hint of dawn to be seen through the heavy clouds shouldering each other above the horizon, and the air was so raw that when the Archduchess threw open a window for an instant, to clear the heavy atmosphere of the room, the tempest burst in with a roar like that of unchained wild beasts, and it took all her strength to close it again.

She herself confessed when, long afterwards, she related the scene, having been glad of this short buffet with an insensate force, for at that moment all that was most cruel, most intolerant, most tyrannical in her was aroused, and she was in the humor to hurt something; the first thing that came within the grasp of her hand. Of a truth, the bantering, mocking mood, which she had constrained herself to adopt before her son, was at an end now, and when she turned from the window, after her victorious encounter with the elements, her eyes were full of scorn and of command as she looked haughtily at the cringing figure still huddled over the almost cold cinders.

"What possessed you to spy upon me?" she said, contemptuously, advancing a step or two.

"I did not come to spy upon you," murmured the wretched, demoralized Empress.

"No, your presence behind this secret door, or rather within it, for you knew of it—which is more than I did—and you had, no doubt, to work some complicated piece of machinery in order to open it, was quite fortuitous; you will have me believe, no doubt, that you were merely promenading inside the wall long after three in the morning, and that quite by chance—bah! You are but a poor liar, after all."

Before that remorseless scrutiny, those cold, level



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tones, that cut like the lashes of a knout, Maria-Anna was paralyzed. She colored, grew pale again, hesitated, tried to speak, failed, and became absolutely unable to keep down the tremor which shook her like an ague. The physical fear which Sophia's anger always inspired in her, now overwhelmed her with tenfold intensity, and assuredly a much more courageous person than she might well have shrunk from the prospect of being shut up with this dangerously infuriated woman, who could neither be deceived nor softened, and who was known to have a hand of iron when offended or injured—swift to punish and slow to relent.

In the momentary silence which followed, Archduchess Sophia, holding her victim with her eye the while, reviewed the situation with swift, concerted thoughts, and to herself admitted defeat. Of ultimate success she did not doubt, but she knew that any information possessed by the Empress was speedily transmitted to quarters where sufficient power resided to delay the execution of her schemes. Had the unbidden participant in her counsels been any other person, she would have found means to insure silence, but though confident that the power she could exert over the weak, frightened woman before her was equal to extracting any promise, she comprehended too well the stuff of which Maria-Anna was made to expect that she would adhere to her word. A promise of secrecy she, nevertheless, decided to obtain, since the fact of its being subsequently broken would place no despicable weapon in her hands, and, furthermore, she resolved to make her defeat on this occasion so costly to her antagonist as to give her no opportunity for the present to taste the sweets of her temporary success.

"Now, my dear," she said, at length, "the rupture of our *entente cordiale*"—here she laughed her little, low,



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musical, mocking laugh—"lies in your own choice; keep secret what you have heard here to-night, even from your father-confessor; refrain from meddling with affairs that you cannot possibly comprehend, and I will, on my side, remain neutral where you are concerned. On the other hand, say but one word of all this to a living soul, and you will indeed have reason to regret it."

The words were pronounced almost lightly sneeringly, slightly, and without especial emphasis and accentuation, more like a warning to a timid child than a menace to a kindred power, and their seeming moderation, compared to the withering anger of a few moments before, encouraged Maria-Anna to break at last her tremulous silence.

"For pity's sake, Sophia, do not talk to me as if I were a common spy. I mean no harm to you or to Franz; but cannot you see that what you propose would cover us with eternal shame and reproach in the eyes of all Europe? Cannot you relent towards us? Will nothing but our disgrace satisfy you?" she concluded, hurriedly, noticing a peculiar smile which she had seen before on Sophia's lips, and which she dreaded like a blow.

"You are distressing yourself most needlessly," the Archduchess replied, as quietly as ever. "You cannot evade me nor enlist my sympathies, so it is quite useless to try. You are aware that I am not overbearing, and that I will not tamely submit to treachery, or sit a silent witness to perfidious meddlings; therefore, be advised and accept my terms, such as they are, before I reconsider them, and offer harsher and juster ones."

The Empress was at the same time emboldened and puzzled by the restraint in tone and manner of her dreaded foe. "May—may—not your plans entail some—some danger? 'Who has sown the wind shall reap

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the whirlwind,' " she ventured, with timid and stupid sententiousness.

Archduchess Sophia let her eyes rest on her sister-in-law with an expression of half-contemptuous pity, half derision, which might have given her plentiful food for reflection had she been a woman who ever reflected.

"You possess all the antique virtues, even a praiseworthy facility in Biblical quotation," she said, with suave sarcasm. "Let us hope that you number among them that of loyalty to a promise, for assuredly you will not leave this room until you have promised to keep silent about this night's performance—a sorry one, as far as you are concerned, certainly, and of which you can scarcely be proud. An Empress might at least employ an agent to do such work, and not stoop to it herself!"

"All is fair in love and war. I—I—I was only fighting my own battle, Sophia."

Into the face of the overbearing Archduchess came a gleam of malicious amusement, crossed with surprise, at this unheard-of pertinacity.

"I beg your pardon, but you should really make a conscientious effort to be a little less foolhardy. It is not your usual attitude, and you know what our French cousins say: '*Ne forcez pas votre talent; vous ne feriez rien avec grâce.*' "

"I cannot promise what you ask. Why should I? Promises are sacred," contended poor Maria-Anna, "and you know as well as I do that it would be a sin for me to hold anything back from my father-confessor."

"*Ah, nous y voilà donc!*" Sophia exclaimed. "Has anybody ever heard anything that sounded so bewilderingly devoid of reason? Not content with confessing your own sins, you deem it your duty to reveal those which, in your admirable purity of motive, you accord to your neighbors. I sincerely pity your confessor! But,

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before you go any further, would it not be better to calculate what you yourself are likely to lose by such unparalleled loyalty to Holy Mother Church? For, when you have done this, you will very likely thank me for claiming and enforcing your silence!"

Maria-Anna gazed distressedly into space, as if appealing to invisible arbiters.

"This is too, too cruel!" she moaned. "Am I child without discretion that I should be treated so?"

"Oh, you are very far from being a child, as anybody looking at you in this crude morning light would enthusiastically vouch," retorted the other, unable for once to refrain from a wholly feminine repartee, which made the Empress wince, for vanity formed a large part of her pampered, flattery-loving soul. "And now," continued the imperturbable Archduchess, more sternly, "there must be no more talk of wanting or not wanting to do as you are told. You shall do what I wish, and that at once!"

"This is outrageous!" exclaimed the other, goaded to renewed pertinacity. "How long do you expect me to keep silent, and why should you take it for granted that I am inclined to connive at your plots?"

"I see that I have been altogether too patient with you, my dear sister, but"—Sophia considered a moment—"but, let me see—I shall be very moderate, if you will be so good as to refrain from future impertinences—three months will do. After three months I will allow you to give full play to your diligent tongue. During those three months, however, you must not, absolutely *must* not, breathe a word to anybody of our little project!"

"Three months! Twelve weeks!" almost screamed Maria-Anna.

"Ninety days, to put it commercially," commented

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Sophia, looking at the coffered ceiling with meditative eyes.

The Empress held up her hands in vehement protest, and, in a high, agitated, trembling voice that belied the astonishing energy of her words, cried:

"You can do what you please, Sophia, but I will promise you nothing! I have feared you greatly, it is true, but I do not fear you any longer, whatever you may choose to do to me!"

Archduchess Sophia gazed at her with undisguised amusement. She knew, without the possibility of a mistake, that this was but a momentary flash of revolt, and that Maria-Anna, no more than Ferdinand, would dare to resist her to the end, and this little flash of self-assertion on her prisoner's part seemed very droll to her.

"Poor Franz, I hope he fell asleep in my room!" she murmured, "*puisque c'est tout à recommencer*. I am not very tolerant of defeat," she continued, louder, "although I may have to swallow it at some future time, but that time is not yet. I invariably contend that what one wishes to accomplish can be compassed sooner or later; with me it will be sooner, that is all. *Peste! ma chère*, a crusade against me embraced by you and your party is visionary indeed! I had hoped better and especially far wiser things from you." She smiled, and looked over to the rain-lashed windows. "The gods have showered upon you their fairy gifts, and they will be too merciful to those who look upon you as one of the greatest acquisitions the Habsburgs ever made to let you attempt resisting me unhindered."

The Empress had braced herself to withstand the fit of rage which she felt certain Sophia would treat her to when she found herself openly defied; but, surprised by the continuance of this suave, calm insolence, crushed by her antagonist's unruffled air of mastery, and, above all,

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too frightened and humiliated to control her nerves, she sank back upon the cushions of her chair and burst into tears.

Archduchess Sophia rose and stood over her with a face that had the immutability of a mask of stone. She had played with her mouse long enough. Now she would put an end to this wearisome scene, and when she spoke it was with a bitter fierceness, before which the sobs of the ignominiously detected listener died into silence.

"I wish no more words between us. You know how basely you have acted. All your life has been one long eavesdropping; this last and supremely disgraceful deed committed by you, an Empress, has but set the seal upon your shame, in my eyes at least. One can pardon and understand sin, even crime, but not baseness. A daughter of kings should at least be loyal and truthful and brave. You are none of these things, and your attempt at resistance just now was a mere piece of comedy. I know you; you are a fit mate for the miserable *Roi fainéant* you married, and it is because I do know you both so well that I mean to wrench the crown from you, who have sunk so despicably low. Were your honor or Ferdinand's honor called into question, I would, of course, defend it—as I would that of any of the Habsburgs—not for your sakes, but merely for my own, since from my heart I despise you both. And now I have trifled much too long with you. Promise me silence, for if you still refuse you will rue the very day you were born!"

Huddled in her chair, exhausted, hysterical, and incapable of further resistance, Maria-Anna faintly murmured:

"I promise."

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"It is understood that by this promise you engage not

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to communicate what you have heard to-night to any one, by writing or otherwise, and also that you will not act upon your information, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Ah, I am glad that we have come to an understanding. Will you permit me to assist you to the door? It is day—after a fashion—and you must be tired."

The Empress rose limply. Dazed by the exhausting scene she had just gone through, she obeyed mechanically, and suffered herself to be conducted across the apartment. Slowly she passed down the corridor, hardly knowing whither she went, for all the pride and vanity of her narrow soul had been crushed out for the moment, and the greatest humiliation she had ever known poured into their empty places.



## CHAPTER IV

Two months later, on December 2d, 1848, the old citadel of Olmütz looked more grim and forbidding than usual under a leaden sky of uniform and dismal grayness, low and disconsolate and threatening. Snow lay thickly on the ground and weighed down the branches of the pines all over the country, and now and again a bough snapped under its burden with a sharp, tearing sound, followed by the clear, steely tinkle of falling icicles.

The cutting north wind, blowing like a death-dealing blast, was full of whirling flakes, like feather-tips, waltzing in maddened circles, freezing as they fell, and adding to the heaped-up whiteness hiding the world from sight. As the morning wore on the whole lowering heaven seemed to open, so dense a *tourmente* poured upon the small town where the Court had taken refuge. A thick, woolly, impenetrable gloom enshrouded everything like a suffocating cloak, and the weather grew wilder and wilder under the cruelty of that black frost, the chill of that desolate winter.

Above the fortress, above the wildly flapping folds of the Habsburg standard, a flight of huge, dark birds, their sable wings monotonously sweeping the sombre sky, kept circling round and round, each circle narrowing and widening again regularly, while their dismal croaking made itself heard above even the roar of the wind.

Those who caught sight of them crossed themselves and muttered superstitiously about "the curse of the Habsburgs," and about the dread legend of the ravens,

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supposed to betoken misfortune by their mere presence to all members of the Imperial family.

Many years later those dusky birds of ill-omen hovered with sinister croakings above the proud heads of Archduchess Charlotte and of Archduke Ferdinand-Maximilian, in the fragrant gardens of Miramar during their last walk there together before starting upon their ill-starred journey to far-off Mexico; one of the gloomy band alighting with a swoop on the very train of the new-made Empress.

Still later they accompanied the travelling-carriage of Archduchess Maria-Christina, leaving Vienna to join her Royal *fiancé* at Madrid, where she ultimately suffered all that a woman can suffer, and but five short years ago the same black-plumed messengers flew to bring her death-warrant to that peerless creature, Empress Elizabeth, upon a magnificent blue-and-gold, green-and-silver autumnal afternoon, as she sat on the moss-grown rocks of the Swiss mountains above Territet, gazing at the lake, the woods, the glaciers, and the far-distant haze of the mellow horizon. Similar presage their swift wings bore to poor Archduchess Marie-Louise journeying from her dear native land to wed Napoleon; to Emperor Joseph, to lovely Queen Marie-Antoinette, whom they accompanied to the very steps of the scaffold, and to many, many others belonging to that glorious but sorely afflicted House of Habsburg.

And yet few know the origin of this curse, or rather the primary cause of the ravens' supposed blighting influence upon all the descendants of Rudolph, first of the name, for the legend has never been printed as yet, save perchance in some long-forgotten, black-letter record, which none who live now have so much as heard of, and it is handed down orally in the inner family circle of those whom alone it concerns.

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Thus it runs: Nearly a thousand years ago there lived, near the spot where the river Aar joins the Rhine, a bold and powerful lord, who, by his mighty courage, vanquished all his foes; a tall and handsome man, very fair and of splendid bearing and with a physiognomy that showed both the habit and the power of command. He was satiated to weariness with public homage, and, though he ever acknowledged it with proud and courtly grace, yet his happiest moments were those which he spent among the towering peaks of the mountains, or within the deep gloom of his forest-lands, hunting the bear, the wolf, or the red deer from their silent, mysterious haunts; for he was an ardent disciple of Nimrod, and when he gave the *coup de grâce* to some fierce animal which he had conquered by brute force, his blue eyes darkened to steel-like brilliance with an instantaneous and unconquerable joy which had won him the sobriquet of *Der Habicht Graf* (The Vulture Count).

Such was Gontran-le-Riche, Count of Altenbourg, a man to be both feared and admired, swift and fierce in passion, bitter and implacable in hate, keen to avenge and slow to forgive, and yet with a warm, generous heart beating under his glittering surcoat of steel, and a sense of justice and of fair-play rare indeed and superb to behold in one so nearly omnipotent as he. Even towards his favorite antagonists, the bear and wolf, during the short, bleak winter, or the long, bright summer days when he pursued the wild swan, the blue heron, or the golden eagle through the tall, rough meadow-grass or over the precipitous rocks of the high summits, he displayed those qualities which are generally not found in men who live such free, headstrong, barbaric lives as he did, who know no law, no rule, and no constraint but their own.

One day Gontran-le-Riche was hunting in a maze of

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dense, still woods and fir-clad heights, where headlong rivers thundered through rocky gorges, and madly rushing torrents foamed in the green gloom between the vast trunks of veteran pines, when he came upon a rocky summit, shaped like a stronghold built by the hands of Titans, and as lonely as any falcon's nest hung amid lofty branches. These great, voiceless powers of beauty and loneliness drew Count von Altenbourg irresistibly, and, ascending to the highest point, he sat himself down on a boulder and gazed with enraptured eyes at the admirable, wild panorama of wood and mountain unfolded before him. And as he sat he saw, descending towards him from the clouds, great dark birds, their immense wings circling and sweeping the air with a rustle as of tearing silks. Nearer and nearer and nearer they came, till they were poised immediately above his head, and remained almost motionless in a huge, sombre ring, balancing themselves upon outstretched pinions, so that he could see plainly their fierce, golden eyes bent upon him, their murderous claws drawn up against their silver-flecked breasts, their sharply curved beaks opened menacingly, and he felt that in another moment they would swoop down upon him, who had so boldly intruded upon their domain, and batter him to death with blows from their pitiless wings and rending talons.

Countless were the soaring birds; the whole heavens seemed lined by that angrily ruffled tribe assembled from every quarter, and harsh, threatening noises came ever increasingly from the billowy cloud of gleaming feathers. Nor was their onslaught a slight peril, even for so strong a man as Count Gontran, who, although he had always started honestly and given its fair chance of escape to every woodland quarry, now was in deadly risk of finding no such mercy from this overwhelming force.

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His followers were scattered in the wood below him, quite out of reach of his call, and he was alone to fight against impossible odds. The day was still and cloudy—true sportsman's weather—with no gleam of sun to shine in the hunter's eyes, but in this universal grayness the menace of the vulture horde seemed still more terrible and deadlier of intent. There were few braver men living than he, but he yet realized clearly that for all he knew to the contrary his hour had come, and that he, the *Habicht Graf*, was like to be killed by the very birds whose name he bore. He rose to his full height, however, with undiminished courage, his eyes sparkling with dangerous fire, and on his face a look of utter contempt for his pressing danger. Thus he steadfastly prepared to meet his foes, for men must die, and little does it matter what is the manner of their death so long as they die nobly and without flinching, as men should.

Then, at that moment of dire peril, a wonderful thing came to pass, and a strange, for with the swiftness of summer lightning a feathered cloud, far denser, far blacker than that formed by the vultures, overspread the space between the Count's head and his imminent assailants, darkening still further the light of the gray day, and intercepting the now down-swooping attack of the great birds of prey. No man wrestling through the tumult of battle to reach what he loves best, can fight a more bitter conflict with the death that menaces him on every side than that flight of ravens, coming none could know whence, which, with no human love, no human pity as their incentive, yet cast themselves upon that murderous army of vultures and forced them back with a hoarse, hollow roar of wide-flung throats and clashing beaks, like the sound of a tempest, and drove them swiftly across the darkening skies like a cloud-rack before the wind. The Count could not repress a shout of triumph and of en-



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couragement to the winged legions of his defenders, but even as he gazed victors and vanquished were gone, and only some stragglers still hurled themselves on one another, their smothered cries accentuating the great silence that was again falling upon the green woods. Suddenly the sun broke red through the gray shroud of mist, the pine boughs below Gontran-le-Riche were bathed in light, and his followers, rushing through them, fell at his feet in the joy of having found him after a desperate search, guided only by the strange turmoil of the battle raging above the impenetrable dome of the trees, through which they had labored so long in vain.

Count Gontran, in commemoration of the miracle which had saved him, built himself a watch-tower on the top of the rock which nature had shaped so closely to resemble one, and called it the "Habichtsburg," which from corruption became "Habsburg," so he really was the founder of the Habsburg name, he himself being far better known towards the end of his life by the name of Count of Habsburg than by that of Count von Altenbourg. His knightly pennon also from the day of his strange rescue bore a raven sable on a field or, and since the birds were regarded by him as friends to whom he owed a deep debt, food in plenty was always placed, summer and winter alike, on the rocky base of the tower, so that they greatly prospered and increased, building their strong nests all through the woods for miles around.

When, nearly a hundred years after the death of this great and noble lord, Arch Abbot Werner and his brother, the Chevalier Radbot, came into possession of the solitary tower built by Gontran-le-Riche, Count von Altenbourg-Habsburg, and added to it, until Schloss Habsburg raised its proud turrets and battlements above the green billows of the splendid forest murmuring and



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rustling at its feet; the "Habichtsburg" ravens protested against the desecration of their beloved protector's favorite retreat with such violence, and in such numbers, that a destructive war upon them was promptly decreed. The birds did not readily forsake their time-honored haunt, however, for it is to Rudolph von Habsburg, first Emperor of his House, fully two hundred years later still, that the final extermination of the raven colony around the castle is attributed. Hence the legend to the effect that the birds, disgusted and infuriated by this piece of unparalleled ingratitude, turned their hatred from century to century upon all the descendants of Emperor Rudolph, and that to this very day they take cruel delight in presaging misfortune to all those bearing that ancient and glorious name.\*

Inside the fortress of Olmütz, on the memorable December day of which I speak at the beginning of this chapter, agitation and curiosity reigned supreme. The dim winter light stole through the tall, deep-embrasured windows of the gloomy throne-room, and made so feeble a contest with the shadows that a sense of unrest, born of that troubled time, had fallen upon a group of Imperial personages and high court officials who had been summoned thither.

Together, near the wide porphyry hearth, where huge logs of pine and cedar burned, stood Archduke Ferdinand-Karl, Francis-Joseph's brothers Ferdinand-Maximilian and Karl-Ludwig, and Archduke Ferdinand-d'Este. A little further were the Archduchesses Maria-Dorothea and Elizabeth, shivering in their gorgeous *robes de cour* as they whispered earnestly with Archduke Wilhelm-Joseph, who bent inquiring glances upon the two

\* The orthography of the word Habsburg is uncertain, the members of the Imperial family still write it with a "b," from *Habicht* (vulture).

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heroes of the hour, Prince Windischgrätz and the celebrated Baron Jellachich, Ban of Croatia, no longer a declared rebel, but commander-in-chief of the Imperial forces in Hungary, and a firm ally of Archduchess Sophia.

A little over a month before these two commanders had appeared before rebellious Vienna with an army of a hundred thousand men, had defeated a relieving force of Hungarian insurgents under Kossuth, and after a destructive bombardment had taken the city by assault and reduced it to submission, and it was expected that in a few days they would carry the banner of the Empire against Hungary. Excepting Prince Schwartzenberg, Count Grünne, Baron von Hübner, and those already named, no other persons were present in the great apartment.

The assembled company were discussing the possible reasons of their being so suddenly brought together, for, strange as it may appear, nobody, not even the Emperor's nearest relatives, knew the nature of the all-important ceremony which was immediately to take place.

The ponderous, richly carved furniture, the glittering throne itself, looked ghostly in the almost empty hall, where none dared to talk above a whisper, and wherein the very spirit of the cruel ice and snow that wrapped the outer world seemed to have penetrated, so cold and silent was its atmosphere.

A stray flash from the crackling fire threw into prominence here and there a delicate bit of carving, a jewelled tazza, a Cellini cup, or coaxed high lights from the draperies of deep-purple velvet, and the gold-brocaded portières falling in straight folds before the many doors. That palace of Olmütz was very old, spacious, magnificent, faded, and dull. Busts of dusky, age-yellowed

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marble and of sombre bronze were barely visible in the semi-darkness, amid the worn brocades and the ancient hangings, with strange and pallid figures wrought upon them by hands dead since many centuries.

"What hornet's nest have we stepped into now?" queried Archduke Wilhelm-Joseph, with a sigh of impatience, addressing himself to Archduchess Elizabeth. "Sophia has a finger in it, you may depend. She has always considered that all creation exists only for the honor of her immediate family, and refuses to admit that others may have some additional though no doubt minor objects in view. For the last few months she has had a preoccupied look which, in my humble opinion, bodes no good as to her latest machinations."

"You are, none of you, quite just to her," replied the gentle Archduchess. "She possesses a keener sense of duty than most women, and if her views are perchance somewhat extreme—"

The Archduke laughed sarcastically, and, before time had been given for the interrupted reproof to be resumed, the double doors opposite the throne were flung open, and, preceded by the Grandmaster of the Court, Landgrave Egon von Fürstenberg, walking backward and tapping his ivory wand of office upon the floor, the Emperor and Empress entered and passed towards the dais, followed by Archduke Franz-Karl, Archduchess Sophia, and last, but not least, by Archduke Franz himself.

The groups in the great *Thronsaal* fell abruptly asunder, curtsying and bowing low, but furtively glancing at the pale face of Ferdinand, whose painfully restless eyes and twitching lips denoted a nervousness controlled with visible difficulty. The Empress at his side looked as if she had been recently crying, though now a sombre light of regret and resentment burned in her eyes, and her bosom quivered under the glistening jewels that dec-

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orated it. Now and again she twisted the lace handkerchief she held, and a slight tremor shaking her intermittently, made the diamonds with which her hair was spangled sparkle like liquid fire.

Immediately behind her swept Archduchess Sophia, with her usual stately grace and proud, cold dignity. Her velvet dress was very plainly made, but fitted her magnificent figure to perfection; on her breast shone the stars of many orders, and on her shapely head rested a diadem of marvellous uncut gems which she wore like an Imperial crown. Only her eyes betrayed that she was strung to the highest pitch, for they were alive with an intensity of expression wonderful to behold, as she fixed them on the trembling form of the Emperor and then upon her darling, her handsome blue-eyed boy, the child who so soon now was to be her sovereign.

During the silence which followed it seemed as if all the fierce passions that mould humanity fluttered their unquiet wings through the lofty hall, the air seemed heavy with portent, and a keen tingling tension of expectancy drew every eye upon the throne.

The Emperor's face had turned gray as ashes; for a moment he strove to hide his emotion, conscious that there were but few in the assembly but watched him unkindly. He pressed his lips together tightly, and an unusual and curiously obstinate expression drew down the corners of his mouth, as his eyes sought for a second the terribly commanding orbs of Archduchess Sophia, whose hand closed vise-like upon the sticks of the fan which she held like a marshal's baton; then, suddenly, an expression almost fierce transformed his colorless features into a tragic mask; authority, nay, absolute imperiousness, came into his bearing and manner; he no longer seemed awkward, cowed, and feeble, but dignified and commanding, and for once in his life looked as one born

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to dominate the crowd. His whole attitude, indeed, demanded attention as he rose from the throne, unfolded a paper he held in his hand, and began to read in a deep, firm, sonorous voice none had ever heard from him before, the following declaration:

“For very weighty reasons we have irrevocably decided to lay down our Imperial Crown in favor of our beloved nephew, the Most Serene Archduke Francis-Joseph, whom we hereby declare to be of age, our beloved brother, the Most Serene Archduke Francis-Charles, father of our above-mentioned Most Serene Nephew, having irrevocably renounced his right of succession to a throne which belongs to him by right, according to the fundamental laws of our family and of the state, in favor of his above-mentioned son, Francis-Joseph.”

As he pronounced the last words, more like a sovereign in laying down the sceptre than at any time when he swayed it, the intense excitement which caused this one supreme effort went out within him like a suddenly extinguished lamp; he was overtaken by a reaction visible to all who had been watching him with amazed surprise; he shivered, bowed his head, and sat wearily down again. Immediately Prince Schwartzenberg arose and read, in tones that sounded clear and sharp upon the strained silence, three official documents, the declaration that Francis-Joseph was now of age, his father's formal renunciation to his right of succession, and the Emperor's formal abdication.

As the Prince presented these papers to the Emperor and Archduke Franz-Karl for their signatures, and counter-signed them with his own, many glances turned towards Archduchess Sophia, and noted the very faint smile that hovered about her lips, and accentuated the gleam of exulting triumph in her eyes when she looked



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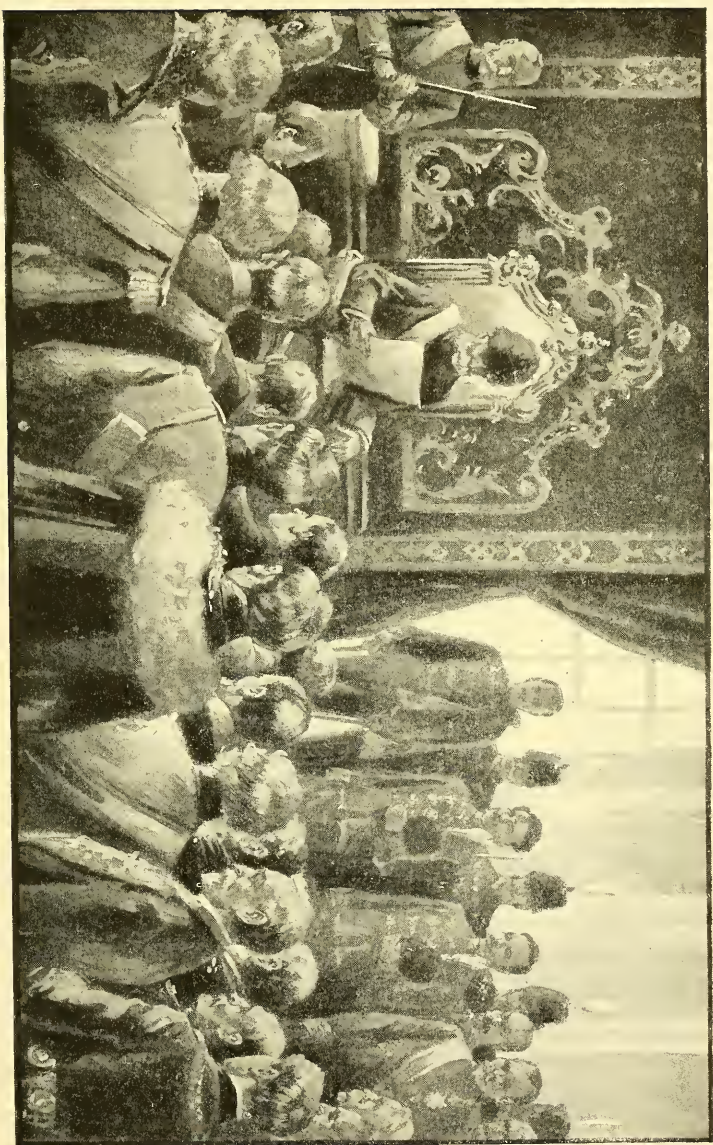
towards her son, whom she crowned that day with a richer diadem than any of the proud old Empire, that of a love so intense, so profound, so devoted, that all else paled before it. She felt truly like one who, after long fasting and travail of spirit before the dim altar of a shrine, suddenly beholds a luminous white vision confirming and rewarding his faith. She had conquered, and success is sweet always, but doubly so to such a hewer of fate as was this inexorably masterful woman, around whom to-day celestial ether seemed to swim and swirl.

As in a dream she heard a voice delivering a farewell address, as in a dream saw faces pale and eyes fill with tears as her son knelt before the retiring Emperor for his embrace and blessing; but as the young sovereign rose to receive the formal homage and congratulations of the members of his House, she came swiftly forward and folded him in her arms with a clasp passionate and strong, like her own heart.

The deed was done! Already the heralds were on their way to proclaim it throughout the little town. The crown of the Habsburgs had changed places, and the poor discrowned monarch, who had donned it thirteen years before, now felt a strange and unaccountable sense of void and of bitter loss as he rose from the throne—vacating it, as it were, for the slender youth who, with ready tears glistening in his eyes, was watching his pale features, which appeared but a shrivelled mask of reserve and misery, as if the page of history which he had just completed had been written in a blinding light which had dazzled and hurt him cruelly, and the passing away of which now left him in an almost sightless darkness.

The young Emperor turned his eyes from him and gazed out at the whirling snow, falling in ever-thickening





A SPEECH FROM THE THRONE



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flakes, afraid of the emotions into which he might be hurried, for in his heart he was profoundly sorry for this broken man, who had spent his whole life in wanting that which he had not, in regretting his own actions when it was too late to efface them, in putting the blame upon fate which was due to his own folly, caprice, and instability; and who yet had always been to him both kind and indulgent.

He had reasoned with himself that the relinquishing of what one is weary and afraid of cannot be looked upon in the light of a sacrifice, and yet the sight of his uncle dethroned and uncrowned was very painful to him, for he did not possess the enviable faculty of being able to readily dismiss from his mind the thought of another's unhappiness. Indeed, the subject had, during the past weeks, occupied his mind to an extent which surprised himself. And thus, after a few minutes of irresolution and of conflicting impulses, he once more abruptly sank on his knee, with the humility belonging to men of high mind and strong feeling, both young and old, before the gray-haired figure standing stoopingly at the hearth-corner, and tears fell upon his uncle's withered hand as he kissed it.

Genuinely touched, Ferdinand raised and embraced him, not now as before, with mere conventionality, but in a tender and fatherly fashion.

"Nay, weep not for me," he said, gently. "I am growing old, and the thought that in my retirement I shall miss something of this life makes me see just now all things in shadow, but I will be consoled in watching you fulfil your duty as I wish I, myself, had done, for you are not one, I believe, to repudiate or neglect your obligations, and so, God bless you, my boy! and grant that your path be not too arduous a one."

None, perhaps, understood the intense diffidence which

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enveloped Francis-Joseph, as a frost encloses and covers a lake with a sheet of armor at the beginning of a hard winter, from the moment when he realized the weight and responsibilities of the Dual-Crown; none understood the bewilderment and inward agitation which made him pronounce the memorable "Good-bye, my youth," on the day of his accession, and none certainly would have thought how heavily the only fear which had ever touched his dauntless and courageous temper—namely, a fear of his own limitations, lay upon him while listening to his uncle's words. He was still bewildered with all that had taken place that morning, and, in answer, he murmured something, he knew not what, and so remained standing before him, unable to recover his composure, while the color came and went nervously on his young face.

"I will try to please you and my parents," he said, at last, involuntarily. It was what a boy would have said, and he knew it, yet he could not restrain the words!

Empress Maria-Anna put out her left hand—the one nearer him—and gently clasped his, for she, too, was moved by so much humility and modesty at so proud a moment for him.

"You have always pleased us all," she said, very kindly. "Do not look back and think of your uncle and myself now. *Cosa fatta, capo hà*. What is done is done. We will be very happy, he and I, in Prague, and will give you a warm welcome, both as Emperor and as nephew, when you come to see us."

Francis-Joseph looked at her with a puzzled expression. He had always thought of his aunt as selfish, exacting, cold, and capricious; perhaps he had misjudged her, and he regretted that, too. So all the heart he had, and that was much, he put into his manner of returning the warm, motherly kiss she gave him. As he turned

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from her embrace he saw in his own mother's eyes a look which disconcerted him, not quite of derision, but cruelly hinting at pity for his extraordinary youthfulness and guilelessness!

Poor boy - Emperor, he was too little versed in the whole gamut of feminine emotions not to be perplexed as to the motive and meaning of that mocking gaze which hurt him so deeply.

Two hours later Ferdinand and Maria-Anna set off for Prague. The snow had ceased falling and the landscape was austere and astonishingly grim in its solemn winter livery of black and white; but the low, gray clouds were slowly dissolving and being drawn away like a huge gauzy curtain from the chill sky, and the walls of Olmütz, the island-fortress—planted in the middle of the broad, frozen surface of the river March—gleamed palely in the intermittent rays of the dim, yellow, sickly sun. Above the ice-clad bosom of the stream, wont in the spring to roll so boisterously, peat-stained and foam-broidered, through its belt of marshes, now motionless and chained down under the iron grip of the frost, flocks of wild-fowl flew, with shrill cries, where, in the early morning, the Habsburg ravens had circled.

The whole scene had changed, indeed, when the new sovereign mounted his charger to accompany his Imperial predecessor so far as the railway station, galloping at the window of the state carriage, with its coachman, in full-bottomed wig and three-cornered hat, seated alone in his glory, and its gorgeous footmen swinging behind.

The ranks of the good-natured and admiring crowd which had assembled to watch the departure opened to let the equipage pass by, with *Hochs* of delight and loud-shouted blessings upon "Franz der Kaiser" and "Ferdinand der Gütige," who "*soi-dit en passant*" is to this day remembered throughout Austria as the softest-



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hearted monarch of them all! The gold lace on the brilliant uniforms of the escort shone gayly, the horses pranced merrily, and there could be no doubt whatever of the popularity of both the young and the old monarch with the excellent Moravians thronging the narrow streets of Olmütz. They evidently knew naught of "*Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi!*" but wisely considered that "*le Roi est toujours le Roi,*" and that if there happened just then to be two of them in their midst, it was all the more glory and joy for them. So, entirely unconscious of any satire in their cries, they shouted enthusiastically for both.

Around the *Bahnhof* the multitude had gathered thickly, swelled by every passer-by who had been drawn towards the vortex in hopes of catching a glimpse of the cortège, if even but of the very tip of the court-chasseurs' plumed hats. The crowd pressed to its closest and densest as the *peloton d'escorte* preceding the Imperial carriage swiftly trotted into view, and the name of Francis-Joseph ran through the people's ranks like a flame through a powder-train.

Already they trusted him; they honored him for the splendid courage he displayed in assuming at so perilous a moment the reins of government; they were proud of him as of a chosen leader; they cheered him deafeningly, especially the women, who were beside themselves with enthusiasm at his proud grace of bearing under such trying circumstances, at the courteous fashion in which he bowed his blond head, and the dreamy, half-eager, half-wistful, wholly grateful expression of his handsome face.

Every heart in this small portion of his millions of new subjects warmed to him, and tears stood in many eyes as, hastily dismounting from his curvetting horse, with a bright and affectionate smile he helped his dethroned



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uncle to alight under the purple marquee which had hurriedly been raised over the station steps.

The troops garrisoned at Olmütz were yet more enthusiastic, if possible, than the burghers had been, and the crisp, cold, winter air resounded with far louder hurrahs than theirs when, followed by a large and brilliant staff, the young Imperial *generalissimo* rode to the parade-ground mounted on a superb bay stallion, and wearing the uniform of his dragoon regiment—a uniform still slightly dimmed by the powder-smoke of Santa Lucia.

From the first the soldiers loved him with a fond, trustful, triumphant affection, both the old and the new troops, the grim, gray-haired, battle-scarred warriors of Radetzky, and the pink-cheeked recruits from the north and the south, the east and the west of his wide dominions, uniting in this unparalleled devotion.

Most military leaders gain fame and popularity only after long, weary, and bitter toil, after a dreary and exhausting pilgrimage, which has silvered their heads and dulled their eyes and their capacity for enjoying such a reward, but he, this youngest of all the generals in his armies, gathered at once and in full the sweet fruitage of success, which burst into bloom spontaneously like some swift, wind-sown, sun-fed flower of exceeding beauty, on the instant when he assumed command.

To-day, among the rank and file filling the parade-ground with a mute, still, immovable mass, there was not one man whose eyes did not turn affectionately on him, whose pride did not centre in him—now so wholly theirs—the beating of whose heart did not quicken as he reined in his charger and saluted them, for they knew, and felt, that in the slender, well-knit body of their young chief, their new Emperor, there lived a courage

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as great and daring as Radetzky's himself, and a fairness, a justice, a kindliness which could find no compare.

When the brief soldierly words which he addressed to them were ended, a great shout arose, strong, full, echoing over and over again in ceaseless thunder to the now bright azure and totally cloudless skies above, and as he heard he became strangely pale; his blue eyes grew dim as he looked upon the men whose voices shook the very earth in their homage to him. A light came upon his face which all who saw it were forever to remember, for in that moment he received, in all its intensity, the grand reward of his own sacrifice, the price of his relinquished youth, and realized in this first hour the perfect splendor of his great rulership, without a single wound from the thorns that hide beneath the jewels of the crown, or a pang of that pain which pursues and embitters every human joy, every human ambition, in the very hour of its fulfilment.

For a few blissful minutes all doubt, all self-mistrust disappeared as had they never been, and it was difficult for him to retain his complete self-possession when saluting them. Once again he galloped down the front of the troops, followed by his dazzling staff, accompanied by the clash of lowered arms, the roll of drums, the glitter of unsheathed swords and presented bayonets. It was one of those hours in which life is transfigured, exalted, sublimated into almost divine glory. No wonder that he never forgot it, nor that murmur, like the sound of a sea throughout ice-bound Olmütz, as he rode back to the palace—the murmur of a great multitude, whose joy pierces deep as tears, the welcome of his people. And as he went, the bitterness of the past months was, indeed, forgotten, while in his heart rose one ardent prayer, that strength might be given to him to be ever faithful to the dreams of his youth.

## CHAPTER V

WILL the world ever quite know, ever quite realize what a task lay before the young monarch, as on December 3d he awoke to the realization that he, and he alone, was now responsible for the pacification of a country more than twice the size of Great Britain, a third larger than France, and for the prosperity of some thirty millions of human beings, belonging to seventeen or eighteen different nationalities? Will the detractors of monarchy ever comprehend or appreciate how, assuming this herculean labor as a mere boy of eighteen, he dealt with the crushing problem given him to solve, toiling through years with a nobility and wisdom, a sagacity and an unselfishness, seldom equalled in history?

What pen could describe how through all bitterness he pursued one purpose, how through all desolation he followed a sublimely just course, and how, when all seemed to turn against him, he remained constant to himself and to his vows—ay, and brought his work of peace to an end, as far as human work can ever be completed, to the lasting benefit of all those lands that are subject to his sceptre?

Every rustle of forest leafage, every breath of woodland air, the very odor of the rich, emerald grass, the fresh, free wind blowing from the mountains, the mighty rush of the broad, blue rivers, the rally-cry of the golden eagle above snowy summits, the tinkle of the ice on the glaciers, the faint echo of the village church-bells, and through the hush of the night the hive-like murmur of

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great and prosperous cities, all should rise towards him like an incense of praise and honor, for he made the Dual Empire what it is to-day—a realm fairer than all others, and peopled by beings more completely satisfied with their lot than any I have known.

Those who have read history—I do not lay claim to an historical pen, but merely attempt to portray Francis-Joseph the man—know that for months before and after the young Emperor's accession the land was overhung by the great smoke-pall of incessant wars, and that there was continual strife between the Empire and nearly all of the different nationalities which constitute it, in turn.

The people seemed to have run mad, catching indiscriminately truths, half-truths, and lies, real and imaginary wrongs, from the politicians in the guise of patriots who brayed incessantly to them, so that the few who remained sane were fain to stop their ears in distress and disgust.

Misery, blind justice and blinder injustice, crippled creeds and broken faiths drew down a heavy twilight upon the land, which was deafened by the din of battle-fields and lurid with the glare of burning homesteads and blazing towns. The thirst for "liberty" was upon all. Alike those who had from birth known naught but the squalid dens and fetid, vicious alleys of slums, and those born and bred beneath forest verdure and leading the free, unfettered life of the country-side, babbled of "liberty," as the masses understand that elastic word, which, in their rendering of it, means but license to plunder and to murder those above them.

There will always be mobs, especially now that the lower classes are being confused and made more unreasonable than ever by the thin varnish of a little education, and there will always be men like Caius Gracchus to array the plebeian against the patrician, and discover,

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to their cost, in the day of their success, that the plebeian is a far more cruel oppressor than the patrician himself.

But my opinions on the matter are of little value, and bid fair to make my humble writing lamentably unpopular in these enlightened times. After all, human grist must be ground, that the round world may roll on and spin merrily into space, and whether the grist approves or disapproves of the process matters but little. With which philosophical remark I proceed with my own task.

They were tumultuously bitter, those subjects of our young Emperor. Riotous and desperate, they "played the tiger" savagely, they tore and rent whenever a prey came in their way, and would not be appeased even by such gentle and humane means as those used in Hungary by Feldzeugmeister von Haynau; and who will say that he and his kind were not sorely tempted at times?

Amid this pandemonium, amid these multitudes tossed hither and thither by the lying promises of demagogues and the exasperation of the nobles, while the deafening, threatening roar rose louder and louder, and echoed farther and farther, with the tempest at its height, and the surging waves of human passions unbridled and terrible in their menace, the Emperor alone kept his head with a cool, dauntless zest in peril, rode at the head of his troops calmly, without fear and without bravado, filled with a manly, deep-rooted contempt of danger *tout simplement*, and with a high sense of what his duty was as well. Indeed, when his generals pointed out to him that he had no right to risk his life, which was of incalculable national value, he merely shrugged his shoulders and quietly explained to his horrified interlocutors that no life is really of value, because there are always plenty more just as good to fill the vacancies, his clear, frank eyes resting upon them the while with a cer-



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tain gleam of amusement which they failed to comprehend.

Time heals many wrongs and dispels many fallacies, and not even in Hungary, where the loyalty to Francis-Joseph is to-day almost as great as it is in Austria, is the Emperor-King any longer held in any way responsible for what are termed the barbarous reprisals of 1849. No more do men associate his name with that of Haynau, the execrated commander who terrorized Hungary, in his master's name, by means of which that master never knew or dreamed at the time, and whose fierce, unflinching rendering of justice thrilled like a curse throughout the land, for Feldzeugmeister von Haynau's verdicts had more than the sternness of the Levitical law. He exacted two eyes for an eye, two teeth for a tooth, two lives for a life, and held, rightly or wrongly, that rebels should be slain with even sharper weapons than their own. Therefore, let a few short lines suffice for the mention of him who was so widely known by the significant appellation of "the Butcher of Brescia," gained when, a few months before his advent in Hungary, he had turned this fairest of Lombardian cities into a hideous shambles, and put to the sword all those who had risen against its Austrian garrison. Over Hungary he was given fatal powers, and he used them to the uttermost, draining the blood of his enemies, drop by drop, spreading calamity and desolation wherever he went, because "he who rises by the sword shall perish by the sword," and truly "every man was put to death according to his sin" where his relentless rule held sway.

He wrung the hearts of the Magyars dry of all joy, of all pride, of all happiness, of all hope, with as much unconcern as they themselves wrung a goat-skin dry of wine in the days of their prosperity. The Emperor, had he known then of this mercilessness, would have stopped



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it swiftly indeed, and when, too late, alas! he found it out, this terrible discovery fell on him like the stroke of an iron mace; when he knew at last the width and the depth of the wrong wrought in his, Francis-Joseph's name, Haynau himself, though bold to the core and possessed of wellnigh unrivalled courage—for one must do justice to all—had he witnessed his master's anger, would have shrunk and quailed and trembled with fear.

There can be no greater tribute paid to the chivalry of the Magyar character than to state, in conclusion of this terrible page of Hungarian history, that when Haynau's name had become so abhorred throughout Europe that the foulest criminal hiding for murder was held to be worthier than he of pity, when the blood-smeared fabric of his sorry celebrity had tumbled about him and nearly crushed out his own life, and when his honors, his dignities, his ambitions had all crumbled into dust like dead sea-fruit—when, indeed, there was not a city, a village, or a hamlet in the breadth and length of Europe where he was safe from assassination, he threw himself upon the mercy of Hungary, claimed the protection of the hot-headed, warm-hearted people whom he had wronged, and went confidingly to finish his days on the Magyar land he had caused to be drenched with the blood of its greatest aristocrats, its fairest women, and its bravest soldiers.

Vengeance lay then in the hollow of the Magyar's hands, to slay or to spare. Even without participating in this late-dealt retribution, they could have yielded up the tyrant to the doom he had merited by his long career of pitiless hatred and cruelty, but a justice higher, purer, loftier than that of revenge stirred in their hearts, one which assuredly must have pierced Haynau more deeply than a death-thrust, and which must as certainly also have brought to him his first pang of remorse; for it

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was a justice of mercy dealt to one who had never shown any, of pity to this ardent apostle of a yet harsher law than the stern, ruthless *lex talionis* of Israel, and bitter of acceptance it must have seemed to his untamable spirit.

Under the sapphire-blue skies of Hungary Feldzeugmeister von Haynau spent the remainder of his life. Under the lustre of its great, silvery, almost Oriental moon, of its red-gold sun, he vainly strove to put from him the remembrance of the past, and during all that time never did even a drunken peasant, by coarse jest or jeering look, recall to his mind his impotence to roll away a single stone from the crimsoned cairn that he himself had heaped to his own memory; and, thanks to the astonishing magnanimity of his enemies, to the generosity of the compatriots and relatives of his very victims, he found in Hungary sanctuary safer even than did the criminals of olden times at the foot of the sacred altars.

While Haynau was yet repressing and oppressing Hungary, however, across the barrier of the Alps, in the gladiolus-filled marshes and the green, mulberry-shaded pastures of Northern Italy, in the crocus-studded meadows of the Veneto, and beneath the gold-and-purple sunsets of Lombardy, under the canopies of trellised vines, the tall hedges of *laurier rose*, *sulle Rive d'Adria bella*, and far into the mountainous north country—where huge barges, laden with white and purple figs, amber pears, rosy apples, and great baskets filled with golden grapes flap their gayly painted sails lazily above the lily-choked waters of turquoise lakes—raged the deadly struggle between the blue-coats of Italy and the white-coats of Austria.

The Italians were tired of that bitter warfare, and fierce in their wrath, not only against the Austrians, but

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also against their leader, King Charles-Albert of Sardinia, whom they accused of "banqueting at ease in palaces" while their hearths were desolate, their children foodless, and their wives, mothers, and babes dying of fever like flies. Unjust as were their loud murmurs against the man who, to believe them, had forgotten them, sold them, and been faithless and untrue to his pledges, yet their misery was great, their frames were gnawed with want, and they had been forced to recoil again and again before the shock of Austria's onset.

Charles-Albert himself was maddened with indignation by the disaffection of his soldiers and subjects against him. "They curse me behind my back; let us see what they will dare say to my face!" he exclaimed, angrily, on the morning of the battle of Novara, and, disregarding the warnings of his generals and of his staff, he mounted a fresh horse, and, with teeth clinched and hands sternly gripped on the bridle, he rode straight into his sullen, fog-soaked, powder-begrimed Piedmontese army, so embittered against him, so ready to upbraid him, if nothing worse, down into the close-wedged ranks, into the very heart of the malcontents and rebels, till, when his charger could push a way no further, he contemptuously faced those who but a few moments before were loudly clamorous against him without a flicker of his keen, brave eyes.

Utter amazement followed this certainly most unexpected apparition in the dark smoke and the white, clinging, drenching fog, and a great silence fell upon the whole enormous assembly.

"So you are cursing and upbraiding me, I am told!" he cried, in a voice which penetrated to the very last ranks of his momentarily cowed troops. "See! I am here, tell me what wrong I have done you?"

There was in the familiar, challenging tone something which struck a chord never quite dumb in men's hearts,

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while in the cool bravery, the *sang-froid* of the King, sitting firmly on his nervously plunging horse, his face unblanched, his eyes meeting theirs with complete and undisguised scorn, was something which temporarily arrested their mad irritation. But suddenly a single piping, shrill voice cried out from some undiscovered point: "Give up the crown, or down with you!"

At once savage yells and uncouth oaths broke from these men, persuaded that they were but poor, purblind tools, forced to do all the dirty, difficult work for this man set so high above them, obliged to tunnel his way for him, to throw the bridges by which he hoped to pass on to victory, while they lay gasping, dying, wounded, starved, cast aside, unrewarded and unthanked, and a fierce grudge against what they called his pestilential tyranny burned in their breasts. Were they, then, to be forever and ever the mill-horses made to grind for his profit and glory? So they roared and shouted themselves hoarse, hurling the most undeserved and senseless charges at him, while he listened, unmoved, his thoroughbred rearing and fretting, terrified at the pushing forms jammed and crushed against its sleek sides, at the forest of hands and arms tossing in violent protest, at the thousands of voices thundering imprecations, at the hungry, savage sea of upturned faces, with bright, fierce eyes and wide-open mouths foul with curses and twisted with slavering hatred.

Late that night, in a little peasant hut sheltered by trees dripping with the soaking rain, which veiled the whole landscape and dulled and blotted it out like a soaked *fusain* drawing—one of those cheerless nights which even in balmy Italy are dreary and depressing and overhung with mist and cloud beyond all description—Count Thurn, Commandant of the Fourth Austrian

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Army Corps sat with several of his officers around a fire of crackling pine-cones and dried furze.

The house, low, lonely, poor, was overhung with festoons of vines beginning to bud, through which the swiftly descending drops pattered lugubriously. In the darkness, beyond the faint glow filtering through the wet window, a few shepherds, goat-herds, and, perchance, one or two men of a less peaceable calling, whose arguments had much to do with powder, ball, and dagger, had taken shelter beneath a gigantic fig-tree, beside a pool of green, slimy water, on the other side of which the troopers of Count Thurn's escort had tethered their horses under a half-demolished shed.

Suddenly a small travelling-carriage came in sight, the tired horses splashing and sinking wearily over their fetlocks in reddish liquid mire; it stopped before the rickety door of the little house, and from it descended a man who walked with a slight lameness from a strain in his right foot. This did not detract from a proud, somewhat commanding grace of bearing, stamping him at first glance as a personage of distinction, and when he advanced into the miserable room where Count Thurn and the officers of his staff had just supped, they rose to greet him, inwardly wondering who so grand-looking a man could be, travelling thus accompanied by a single humble attendant, who had remained outside with the goat-skin-clad driver of the little travelling-carriage.

The stranger stood bareheaded before the Austrian commander and bowed. "I am Count de Barge, a Piedmontese cavalry officer, and after your forces won the battle of Novara I obtained permission to absent myself from the army during the duration of the armistice. Your Emperor should be a proud man to-night, for his army has fought bravely and fairly. Charles-Albert has abdicated, and you will now no doubt conclude peace on



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easy and honorable terms. Will you pardon me if I intrude upon you for a few moments while my sorry team is fed?"

"You are welcome, sir! Any stranger, be he friend or foe, is entitled to shelter on such a night, but pray do not waste breath or time on courtesies; you must be tired and hungry. Let me see what our meagre larder can offer you."

"No, no! Do not trouble," he replied. "A cup of the hot coffee I see on the table is all I need, since you are so kind."

There was a charm in this stranger's manner that was quite irresistible; he talked well and with a great accuracy of knowledge about military matters in general, and the present war in particular, and Count Thurn derived much pleasure from the cultured and sympathetic conversation of this brilliant and interesting unknown, who certainly possessed the gift of facile and eloquent words to an unusual degree.

At last he rose abruptly. Two hours and a half had gone by since he had entered the hut. Count Thurn signed his pass through the Austrian lines before accompanying him to the door.

"It would be commonplace to thank you. I have trespassed too long on your patience, and you have been courtesy itself to a fallen enemy," he said, in gracious acknowledgment.

Count Thurn made a gesture of deprecation, and bowed very low.

"Good-night, sir; there can be no mention of gratitude on your part. It is for us to thank you, for you have spoken to our hearts. Good-night again, and may you have a fair and safe journey."

When "Count de Barge" had bowed himself out, and the creaking door had closed behind him, Thurn glanced



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at his watch; it was three hours after midnight, and in the distance the sonorous voice of a young shepherd was singing as he drove his sheep through the slackening rain towards the distant pastures:

“Ad ogni finestra vo’ tendere un lacio  
A tradimento per tradir la luna  
A tradimento per tradir le stelle  
A tradimento per tradir il sole  
Perche restai tradito dall’ Amore!”

Many days later Count Thurn discovered that his guest of that night was no less a personage than King Charles-Albert on his way to seek a refuge in Portugal, where, three months afterwards, he died at Oporto of a broken heart. The one servant who had accompanied him on the evening of Novara, and who alone followed him into exile, closed the eyes of the proud and valiant man, who, after abdicating in favor of his son Victor-Emmanuel, had absolutely refused to be treated otherwise than as a simple citizen.

Nevertheless, this brave and noble monarch also received his quota of public censure. The foul wanderers of the air love to gather and croak jeeringly around the dying eagle, and the ever-generous masses, like the toad in the mud-hole who spits industriously at the firefly, never miss a chance of defiling that which shines above them and which their ignorance forbids them to appreciate.

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Within ten months after his accession to the throne young Emperor Francis-Joseph—whom we have long neglected, it seems to me—stood supreme in his war-torn dominions. Hungary had at first defied him successfully, but Russian aid and dissensions among the

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insurgent leaders at length enabled him to bring to an end the Hungarian rebellion, while the genius of Radetzky, by the crowning defeat at Novara, saved the Italian provinces to the Empire.

Once more the Austrians held undisputed sway throughout the plains of the Po. The carved palaces of Venice, with their great pointed doors and wide flights of water-steps—the “Queen of the Adriatic,” with its fugitive and unutterable fascination, its green, luxuriant Lido, shaded by acacia and cereus, its balmy air and radiant light, its never-ceasing melodies floating down the moon-bathed lagoons, its delicious fragrance wafted from the millions of blossoms studding the Brenta meadows, and many other lovely, covetable cities filled with art treasures of priceless worth, were theirs forever—at least, they thought so — and the inhabitants of these conquered lands were bidden to make the best of it. But discontent smouldered beneath the surface. Beautiful Italian great ladies, proudly ensconced in the galleries of old palazzi, cursed between their pearly teeth the white-coated *stranieri*, and glanced wistfully at the historic walls around them, which had failed to ward off that trans-Alpine domination which they considered so crushing a disgrace.

In the narrow, sun-baked streets of Verona, within its grim old fortifications, where emerald-hued lizards scamper away at the mere rustle of the brown grass, within its desolate houses, beat many hearts that burned for revenge against the light-hearted conquerors who were seeking to waltz themselves into favor to the gay strains of their regimental bands, and who poured floods of pretty speeches into the unwilling ears of those modern reproductions of the pretty, black-eyed maidens, immortalized by the masterly hand of their great compatriot, Paolo Veronese.

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Every heart held close to the past, and the spectator was moved to a curious sense that the present was unreal, and that the clock of time had been suddenly set back many years. The people would not break the spell, nor allow themselves to believe that their dream of national glory had fled forever, but all the gay, elastic *insouciance* of the Latin temperament was gone from them, and they were content only when, after the *Couvre-feu* had sounded, their towns grew still, the pigeons went to roost with a great whir of wings in the square, ivy-grown church-towers, and the old chimes called the faithful to "Ave-Maria."

The keenest observers alone detected a scent of death amid the spiced odors of the pine woods and a reek as of the blood that was later to be shed heavy upon the air of Lombardy and Venetia; saw the faint gleam of the star of liberty rising slowly, furtively above the mountains; and heard a faint, prophetic sound as of the strife that was soon to come again and destroy so many young Austrian and Italian lives; but for the time being Austrian hearts beat high with pride, because the joy of success was theirs.

And, during all these months, what of Archduchess Sophia? More proudly than ever, now that she could distinctly see the superb results of her training, she loved her Imperial son. The hand of time which mellows and softens all things had not altered her haughty chilliness nor changed the stately, noble-looking woman in a single particular, yet towards her eldest boy her heart yearned in all his troubles and vicissitudes, and beat high when, watching him from afar, she saw how his splendid nature, at the first call of duty, had leaped up from its quiescence, like a lion from its sleep.

She never permitted him to know it, of course, but she was determined that his life should still be moulded

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by her will, and by her decree she still held that his fate should be ruled. Although, in justice to her be it said, that when, during that fearful year of 1849, she saw the haggard, broken look his young face wore, the hollow circles beneath his eyes, the air of wearing pain hardly concealed by the quiet dignity of his bearing, she was seized with a baffled sense of despair at these sorrowful signs of what her ambition had brought upon him and was now quite beyond her power to alter.

Her soul had striven to accomplish a great and noble work, she had given her whole life to this end, and as she gained it she could not but see that it left him, in the first flower of his youth, to suffer for her boundless ambition. Yet, even at such moments of bitter and poignant regret, she would not yield or confess even to herself that her darling's happiness and freedom had been and was forever sacrificed. She would have given her life for his, but she would not admit that, in so far as Franz himself was concerned, the fruit of her sowing was evil, and that the burden of sovereignty she had laid upon him was passing heavy, even for his broad, young shoulders.

Indeed, his burden was during those weary months an especially crushing weight, and the young Emperor, who soon after his accession had selected as the motto expressive of his political ideal *Viribus Unitis* (united forces), saw moments when he might well despair of the realization of this fair dream.

It was when Jellachich was ignominiously beaten by Görgey, the great Hungarian commander, on the 6th of April, at Isaszeg, that Archduchess Sophia saw her son's calm utterly broken for the first time. They had been discussing the gravity of the situation together earnestly when news of the catastrophe arrived.

The Archduchess drew nearer to him and laid her

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hand upon his shoulder—that hand made to hold so firmly and to relinquish power so unwillingly.

He did not move nor turn his eyes to her, but sat motionless and silent, and the mother's white and shapely fingers involuntarily tightened their light grasp, her fine, clear-cut features growing pale, her lips twitching ever so slightly.

Gently but inexorably he put her hand from him and moved away a little.

A shiver ran through her frame, and both her hands this time fell upon his shoulders again.

"My son," she said, in a calm, cold voice, "I am your mother, and also your best and most loyal adviser. I have brought you to the throne, and it is but meet that I should help you now to bear your troubles."

The veins swelled upon the young man's temples; he was deadly white, and he moved from beneath her touch once more.

"My own peace, my life, my soul—I would give all to stop this carnage, to attain my aim, which was to bring them peace and happiness, but I cannot, I cannot!" he cried, desperately, struggling vainly with uncontrollable emotion.

The words rang out in passionate bitterness, in pitiless condemnation of himself, and the imperious woman, who had never as yet known fear, trembled as she heard them and was sore afraid, for until that hour she had never suspected, nay, not even she, the depths of his character.

"You have done better than well until now, Franz," she protested. "You have accomplished more than any man of your age ever did. Effort is for man, my child, but the result is with God. Cease to blame yourself so unjustly."



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"I have done nothing, accomplished nothing; my effort has been barren."

His voice sounded hollow with pain, like a cry wrung from the breaking strength of a courageous soul, and his mother shivered a second time, while in her eyes, which had rarely shown such weakness, tears gathered—tears for his so sorely tried strength and for his passing weakness, for the grief depicted on his face, for the misery of it all—and the tenderness which was ever a hidden treasure with this high-spirited, high-mettled woman momentarily transformed her whole being into a truly gracious figure of motherhood, and bore down the harshness which she had at first assumed as a tonic for his shaken nerves.

For one long hour his step unceasingly paced the room where they were alone together, while she sat on a carved, high-backed chair, motionless from the crown of her shapely head—since a few weeks delicately frosted with a little silver—to the hem of her olive-hued velvet gown, giving no further sign of her pity or her adoration for the only living being for whom she really cared, since just then both sympathy and severity seemed equally unbearable to him.

At last he stopped his weary walk, the recently acquired bronze of his face paled to a sickly tint, and stood before her quite silent, save for the deep-drawn breathing that shook his tall frame. In that hour he had suffered more cruel chastisement than pursues guilt from prison to scaffold; now, however, he was almost master of himself, and when he spoke his voice, although a little forced in its constraint, was nearly steady.

"I have been mad for a while, I think, but I must be so no longer. I will place myself at the head of Benedek's Brigade and I will march upon Raab. I have been kept here too long, because I was told that my



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presence upon the bastions encouraged and heartened the troops; but action in the field is what I need; nothing else will restore my energy to me." And he smiled faintly.

The Archduchess had risen and stood before him, strangely touched, although every word the young Emperor spoke quivered like a knife in her heart, and, in the bitterness of her anxiety, she suddenly became conscious that she had at last encountered a determination beside which even her own was dwarfed.

For a moment there was silence, and in that moment the tortured mother gathered back her strength, and resumed the armor of calm composure which she wore nearly always with friend and foe.

"Franz, you are nobler and greater than I had ever dreamed you would be," she said, simply.

He turned his head away with a quick gesture, so that she might not see the sudden tears which prevented him from speaking, his hand closed on the one held to him, he bowed low, kissed the cold fingers lying passively within his own, then the dull echo of the closing door vibrated through the silence and Archduchess Sophia was alone.

Alone with a grief so sharp in its poignancy, so utter in its desolation, that even her pride in him was, for the time, wholly inadequate to console her. The words that he had uttered, the light of self-sacrifice which she had beheld on his face, were now her tempters and torturers. Should she bid him spare himself—and her; should she now, after all her teachings and examples, recant? The very thought of so great a humiliation was unbearable; but in a flash she realized what her life would be should he fall in one of the battles which drenched the fair soil of the Empire she had made his with blood; her fevered imagination displayed to her the terrible, lonely, loveless course of years which she

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would be condemned to pass. Could she endure it? Her head sank between her hands, great sobs heaved her breast, shaking her from head to foot, and she wept, not as women weep, but as men weep, from the depth of their being; she had hardly strength for such a trial. Yet, breathe in his ear the whispers of caution, undo—if she could, and that she doubted—the labor of eighteen years, sacrifice his reverence and admiration for herself! She could not. No, no! Not even her mother's love, her mother's fears could make her do such a thing.

The twilight deepened into night, the shadows grew more sombre around her, but still she sat there, her head bowed, her heart and soul turning to water within her. Of what avail were now her pride, her will, her iron force, her haughty dominance, since they could not shield her from this misery, the common lot of mothers. The long corridors and vast halls of the Hofburg were as silent as death, save for the occasional faint sound of an Arcierengard's muffled step as he went his rounds. From afar, now and again, the sharp rattle of musketry came from the ramparts, or the challenge of a sentry rang out with a swift click of arms from the inner yard below her open windows; but hours passed and she did not move, until out of the sheer weariness of her misery arose reconquered resolution; the doubts, the conflicting ambitions, hopes and fears for Franz her son, and Francis-Joseph her ideal sovereign, that had torn her heart asunder, fell from her, and, throwing herself upon her bed as the dawn broke, she slept dreamlessly—sleep bringing her oblivion and peace.

She awakened with the light of the sun, warm and clear, beating upon her face. The memory of a great struggle came back to her, but softened by a strange feeling of relief, of serenity, and also of self-pity, for she real-

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ized now how futile would have been her efforts had she attempted, in her folly, to turn him from his purpose. Nor was she again shaken in the knowledge of her limitations when she bade him God-speed a few hours later, and saw in his eyes, blent with his habitual look of fond reverence for herself, when she heard in his voice, 'although yet tenderer than usual, an unconquerable determination, a resolve which could no longer be swayed or bent at her will.

Never, in all that had gone before, did the Austrian troops behave so superbly as when, with their young sovereign at their head, his well-known, well-loved voice thrilling their stout hearts, the brigade of Benedek forced an entrance into the Hungarian town of Raab, and drove the insurgents to take refuge in Acs, where they were soon to be surrounded by their victorious enemies.

When he led them the Austrian forces were invincible; they surged about him, striking, thrusting, pouring down upon their antagonists like torrents of lava from the heart of a volcano, bursting through bristling forests of steel, and foot to foot, breast to breast, rolling back the desperate tide of Magyar valor. Francis-Joseph greatly honored these men who so magnificently opposed him, and I have myself heard him say of them, "They were fighters who would take no quarter, who kept their faces to the front till they were stretched in heaps upon the ground, and their unconquerable bravery made our victories almost as costly as defeats."

But how shall I describe the boundless gratitude, the joy too deep for words, of Archduchess Sophia when both Italian and Hungarian war-clouds had rolled away from the land, and when, looking upon her son, she saw in him the saviour of the Habsburg Crown and the Habsburg honor? The radiance in his eyes quivered deep in her own heart, and there was on her face—which showed

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indelible traces of her cruel anxieties during the past weeks—the light of an unutterable gladness which he had not seen there even on his return after Santa Lucia, though she forbore to throw her arms about him in a frenzy of triumph. For the first time in her life she was completely and blissfully content, and he, too, smiled happily upon her, for the intensity of her jealous and imperious love for him, great in its usurpation of his whole personality, had never as yet alarmed him, as it might well have done had he but known what was to follow.

The unforeseen is chiefly dreaded by women, by men more rarely, and by such men as Francis-Joseph never; and, holding her upon his heart, pressing her closely to his breast, he could not dream that that very love would bring his strength and his life to their uttermost strain of endurance, and fetter him, and another dearer than all else, in unbreakable, unendurably galling chains, until, like a man bruised and stunned by mortal blows, he should be shaken by a voiceless agony and overwhelmed by the deep waters of a bitter anguish.

The Emperor's attitude towards Radetzky, who had so splendidly saved Lombardy to the Empire, was a veritable revelation of the depths of gratitude his young heart could contain, and the grace and courtliness, the almost filial tenderness of his manner to the aged warrior became him well indeed.

Radetzky's step had now become feeble, his back was bent, and his wrinkled countenance showed but too plainly the fatigue and strain of the eighty-one valiant years he had left behind him; but his smile was still infinitely bright, there was an undying humor about the lines of his mouth, and he had as yet lost none of his interest in life.

In the spring of 1849 he had received the Order of the Golden Fleece at the hands of Archduke Wilhelm, sent by

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the Emperor to confer upon him this mark of favor rare in the case of non-royal personages, and a gold, silver, and bronze medal of great beauty, around which was graven, "*Josephus, Comes Radetsky, Summus Austriæ Dux*" (Joseph, Count Radetzky, Chief Captain of Austria), but a still more graceful tribute was in store for him.

On the morning of his first namesday after the battle of Novara, upon entering his study, he found on his desk a superbly carved double-headed eagle of oxidized silver standing with outspread wings upon an onyx column, the foot of which was adorned with exquisitely wrought war trophies. Between its clutching talons the Imperial bird held a miniature portrait of the Emperor, beautifully executed, and an envelope containing the following lines, written by the giver, Archduchess Sophia:

"Der dū gedeckt den Kaiserhaar  
Dū Gottes starker Heldenschild  
O! werd' der Mütter Dank gewahr  
Dū ihres Herrn und Sohnes' Bild!

"Dein Vateraüg' sich dran erfreü'  
Bis dass, vom Reich beweint, es bricht  
Und dir, der Herr für deine Treü'  
Ums Schwert den ew' gen Lorbeer flicht!"

Beside this magnificent present there reposed in a purple velvet box a sparkling sword, and upon its wonderfully chiselled and jewelled hilt was inscribed in diamond letters, "To the greatest and the most valorous soldier of Austria, from his grateful sovereign and pupil, Francis-Joseph I." The remaining space upon the broad, oaken table was covered with stephanotis—Radetzky's favorite flower—and with fresh, green, crisp branches of laurels, bearing their innumerable metallic-looking little berries.

The grim old warrior stood, looking from one to the



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other of these touching tokens of reverence and affection, in silent gratitude, the golden motes of the sunbeams dancing in through the open window growing vague and confused before his eyes as he thought of the loyal, constant, brave young sovereign who, at so early an age, had just gone through so harsh and bitter a training, and whom pride had kept always silent when most sorely troubled, even with this dear old friend whom he so greatly trusted.

Often Radetzky's heart had ached for him, and had he followed his impulse he would have spoken to the boy he loved words of consoling sympathy and encouragement; but well he knew that this would have been not only the most inadvisable but the most distasteful thing that he could have done.

Radetzky did full justice to Archduchess Sophia. He recognized that the weapons she used were of a nature to cut the hands which plied them sooner or later, that she was an irritatingly exacting and terribly autocratic and imperious woman, but neither was he blind to her many grand qualities, and, thinking of the finer, he overlooked the less pleasing side of her nature, although what his keen, shrewd spirit allowed him to divine of Francis-Joseph's future, when the mother's love and blind jealousy would find a rival really worthy of her steel, brought him that birthday morn into a train of thoughts which were an acute pain.

"*Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait,*" he murmured sadly to the amazed aide-de-camp who had just entered, and who stood respectfully at a distance looking over at the table where the magnificent Imperial eagle glittered in the morning light.

When, nine years later, the heroic old man breathed his last, there had, alas, already happened much to justify his fears.



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It was in Northern Italy, still then under Austrian rule, but in Italy, that land of contrasts *par excellence*, where sighs and laughter, mirth and death, love and hatred are ever as cunningly intermingled as the scarlet tulips of Lombardy are with its rippling meadow-grasses, or the stars of the silvery-leaved borage, rolling their azure waves with the golden wheat-fields of Piedmont, that Radetzky's ninety-two years were brought to a close, without a pang, and with the shadow of his old, brave smile on his lips, together with a last blessing from his departing soul for his beloved sovereign. His body, however, was brought home in great pomp, and at his splendid funeral all those present could see how profound was the sorrow of the young Emperor at the irreparable loss of his dear old friend.

## CHAPTER VI

GREAT changes began to take place throughout the Empire as soon as peace was restored. The young monarch had ripened rapidly during the first months of his arduous and difficult reign, and with his usual decision he immediately set about doing what he had appointed for himself to do. And allow me to add that when Francis-Joseph sets his mind to accomplish a thing, his friends and his enemies alike know that his obstinacy—to call it by a very hard name—is very difficult to overcome.

His life was now one of the most brilliant and envied in the world, although there were many things to worry, annoy, and distress him still, many miseries which he could not alleviate, and which weighed upon his kind heart, many sudden crises which yawned like abysses before his feet, and which could at a moment's notice precipitate Austria into fathomless desolation.

These awful responsibilities that had descended upon his life, as swiftly as in tropical latitudes the violet night falls down upon the dazzling day, often depressed him deeply. Sometimes he looked mechanically round upon the glitter of his Court, upon the fair lands that he ruled, wondering greatly at the suddenness and contrast of the change, and bent his head as though under the weight of some great bodily burden, but, ever mindful of a favorite maxim, "He who endures, conquers," he faced life and duty alike with proud serenity, never giving any outward sign of regret or of weariness.

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A fitting motto, indeed, for that man of ever-vigilant energy, whose intensity of application has always been such that throughout all his long life he has never allowed himself to slur over anything, or to omit searching out the minutest points of every subject that he has encountered! He has given his personal attention to every detail of administration, making himself as accessible to the lowliest peasant as to the greatest noble, has investigated thoroughly all aspects of every question, and fully deliberated every step before it was taken. And yet neither the enormous amount of work he has accomplished—rising at five every morning and being at his desk before six, often even still earlier—nor the few short hours set aside for sleep, nor even the excessive bodily fatigue entailed by countless other duties, necessitated by the way in which he understood and performed *son métier de souverain*, ever told on his health. His eyes are as bright, his skin as clear, his step as buoyant after his overwhelming task is over for the day, as when he arises before dawn from the little, narrow camp-bed which has always been his fad.

And notwithstanding all the cares and distractions that pressed upon him, none have ever come to him for help and gone away empty-handed or empty-hearted; he has granted his aid and patronage to every unfriended talent or merit, and has ever had a kind word or a generous action for all who approached him as he followed his difficult way through the toil, the envy, the insincerity, and the bitterness of this world.

Of course one gains experience and skill in his as in every other walk of life, but even at the time of which I write, the Emperor, with the rapidity of a perfectly trained mind, already had every detail of the great Imperial engine clear as crystal always before him; his con-

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ciseness and comprehensiveness were unerring and of almost mathematical exactness.

He no more lost his head, now that success began to smile upon his plans, than when the situation had been at its darkest, and he pursued his way clear of eye as of conscience, and quite regardless of what might be said of him by friend or foe, for another of his favorite sayings has always been: "No man in his senses should care for public applause or public condemnation, seeing with whom the verdict is always shared." Young as he was, his eyes had been washed by the collyrium of experience, and he understood and appreciated adulations at their full value; indeed, there was a queer little smile on his lips sometimes which greatly disconcerted his most ardent courtiers.

Under such a man the great work of reconstruction could not but go swiftly forward. Wise regulations encouraged agriculture, industry, and commerce in the war-racked land, countless abuses were corrected, and taxes abolished. A new scheme of national education was devised and set in operation; new highways were constructed in all parts of the country; the railroad system greatly extended; and the instigator of all these schemes had the satisfaction of seeing that his assiduity, his heroic self-forgetfulness were reaping their reward, and that his influence for good was growing greater every day.

The methods by which he wrought all this have been bitterly criticised, alike by the small-minded, who greatly love to carp at those above them, and by the sober adherent of modern political systems, the special offences cited being, first, that within three years of his accession on the 1st of January, 1852, he abolished the Constitution of the Empire, and for the next eight years, ruled as the head of a strongly centralized "military despotism," so called, only according constitutional

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rights to his subjects again in 1860; and, secondly, that by the Concordat of 1855 he greatly strengthened the power of the Church throughout his dominions, and practically delivered matters educational into ecclesiastical hands.

It is strange that there should be so little comprehension of the character of Francis-Joseph, and of the realm which he rules.

It should be remembered that half a century after the founders of New England crossed the Atlantic, the greater part of Hungary, or nearly one-half of the Dual Empire, as it is to-day, was still under the dominion of the Turks, who were only entirely expelled in 1718. Of the Empire's present population of forty-five millions—it has increased by fifteen millions since the Emperor's accession—some eleven millions are Germans, some nine millions Magyars, and the remaining twenty-five millions are for the most part divided among the various Slavonic nationalities and dialects, as, for example, Bohemian, Pole, Slovák, Slovene, and Croat. Of late years—though this is aside from the subject—to “make the gruel thick and slab” by the mixture of religion as well as of race, many thousands of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Mohammedans have been added to it. The mass of the people is agricultural, and if even to-day they are ignorant and primitive enough, fifty years ago, rated according to these characteristics, the country stood very close to Russia indeed, without Russia's linguistic and racial solidarity. Fiery Teuton, semi-Oriental Magyar, and rude Slav, with the feuds and hatreds of ages in their hearts, were only to be kept from tearing each other's throats by the Imperial authority and that of the Church.

Was such an assemblage ripe for partial self-government, for a constitution, when our Emperor ascended

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the throne? No, a thousand times no! And, if the truth is to be told, it seems as if it were not ripe for it even now, and would not be for long years to come, as would appear to be abundantly proven by the incessant squabbles and disturbances of which the Lower House of the Reichsrath has been the scene ever since 1860.

Could Francis-Joseph, moreover, have succeeded in transforming and pacifying such a realm, crippled, ravaged, and scourged by centuries of strife and bloodshed, in less than ten short years had he been hampered by a Parliament? No, again; a million, million times no! It is because for that period of time he worked alone, great as was the labor, that now from mountain to plain, from vine-clad hamlet to populous city, from sapphire sea to sparkling Alpine glacier, Austro-Hungary is what she is to-day, peaceful and prosperous. It is thanks to that man alone, whose name should be blazoned in gold on all her monuments, and cherished in every Austrian heart; it is thanks to his limitless courage, wisdom, and perseverance that a collection of semi-feudal kingdoms and dependencies were moulded into a modern state.

The autumn of 1851 was a singularly cold and severe one; heavy storms swept down from the mountains of the "*Salzkammergut*" and of Tyrol, and the incessant sound of rain filled the lulls of the furious winds. Rivers, streams, brooks, lakes swelled past all belief and spread desolation and terror through every valley and plain which bordered their channels. At first homesteads, then clusters of houses, and finally whole villages were washed away, ponderous dams burst asunder under the pressure of the waters as had they been built of match-wood, newly made high-roads were totally destroyed, and great wheat-fields swept into worthless heaps of



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sodden straw by innocent-looking little rills of murmuring foam, that tumbled merrily at dawn over banks of forget-me-nots, and at nightfall had changed into devastating torrents. Many lives were sacrificed, and the stricken people were losing all courage before this calamity, and failing to take proper measures for the safety of what remained to them, or, in one word, to make the best of a situation already sufficiently bad, when news came that the Emperor was on his way to personally help them in their distress.

Any other than Francis-Joseph would assuredly have considered that to send help and any moneys that the necessities of the moment demanded would be all that could be expected of him. Not so the young wearer of the Dual Crown, to whom this was but a new call for personal action, and who, as soon as the news of those disasters reached him, lost no time, but started immediately over extremely unsafe and precipitous mountain-roads—for he had been hunting in Carinthia—towards that portion of his Empire which was so sorely stricken.

The trip was in itself no mean peril, for the roads were barely passable, thanks to the mountain water-courses dashing under and over them in many places, and the furious rain pouring, swirling, and thundering without any merciful intermission from leaden, lowering skies; but when His Majesty's post-chaise became untenable, its determined occupant first rode on a pony well used to mountain travel, and finally walked, in order to reach his destination.

There are few things more dreary and dismal to look upon than a prosperous country devastated by flood, the ochre-colored water thick with mud and detritus, the frightened birds flying above the turbid swirl with shrill cries, the continual clangor of the church-bells sounding the tocsin between the gusts and whistlings of the

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wind, the rich pastures and carefully cultivated fields changed into more or less shallow lakes, or cut across by foaming channels, the fruit-laden orchards immersed to the summit of the trees, make up a *tout ensemble* which awes the bravest; and yet when, at the end of a short, foggy, gray day, the Emperor appeared amid this desolation, there was so bright and heartening a smile upon his handsome young face that frightened and disheartened men, women, and children came scrambling from the precarious shelters where they had temporarily huddled, and threw themselves wildly at his feet, uttering cries of joy and of hope, and calling blessings on his name.

His mere presence immediately revived their energy, and, after clinging to him like hysterical children, and being quietly but sternly reproved for their weakness, they set about to obey his orders willingly and even cheerfully. The life-saving boats were, unfortunately, quite inadequate in number, quality, and size, but, nevertheless, some kind of method and system was soon organized, and really one can assert, without any exaggeration or undue partisanship, that the Emperor wrought miracles, showing throughout a pluck, a determination, and a devotion quite unequalled, excepting by his own self when, in 1862, the great, blue Danube, that marvellous stream possessing such savage grandeur, such semi-Oriental charm and beauty, burst its boundaries and swept away many lives from the lower portions of Vienna, and completely swamped the beautiful Brigittenau meadows in the vicinity of the "Kaiserstadt"; and, also, when, in 1879, Szegedin, the old Turkish stronghold and the second town of Hungary, was almost entirely destroyed by the Theiss in flood.

On this latter occasion I was myself present, and well do I remember how the Emperor threw himself into the



EMPEROR FRANCIS-JOSEPH IN HIS ROBES OF STATE



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work, how he toiled night and day, enduring most wearing fatigues and privations, and hourly risking his life with the greatest possible unconcern.

Always where the danger was greatest, continually going to and fro under crumbling walls and tottering buildings in a little boat that he often rowed himself through the yellow flood-water, he rescued a number of doomed people with his own hands, and under the ever-falling rains which discolored and soaked his undress uniform, and drenched him to the skin, he dosed sick women and children with quinine, wine, and meat-juice brought as close as possible to the destroyed city by his yacht, and moved about in an atmosphere rendered fetid by floating corpses and the carcasses of dead animals, with a patience, a cheerfulness, and ever-present self-oblivion which did more to revive the faltering hearts of the wretched, homeless, starving creatures around him than anything else could have done.

Nothing irritated him then—or at least he displayed not the faintest sign of impatience—when the ignorance, poltroonery, or obstinacy of the countless low-class Jews, who had inhabited Szegedin, made his task a really exasperating one, and the admiration he inspired in those who watched, and, in a small, humble way, tried to second him, is as deep and strong to-day as it was twenty years ago.

Indeed, that section of Hungary which had in 1849 fought against him with so fierce and terrible a hatred, owes this *Fils de Preux* a heavy debt, for he made a promise, subsequently kept to the full, of rebuilding Szegedin “finer than it ever had been before”; and when at last he left them, the river having retreated rapidly and all matters of primary importance having been attended to *de main de maître*, there were not a few of the elder generation who felt shamed and humbled



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before this grave, weary, careworn man, who had so literally rendered them good for evil, and that in the grandest acceptance of the word.

Scores and scores of human beings owed their lives to his intrepidity, and their subsequent fortunes to his generosity, for he saw to everything himself, discussed ways and means to reconstruct the town, made all arrangements for the general relief of thousands, personally read the official estimates of the losses sustained, wrote, calculated, glanced through endless reports, and finally with his own hand drew up a plan by which the recreant river could best be restrained in the future, and that with all the knowledge of a specialist.

I will never forget his farewell to the survivors of the Szegedin disaster. All those strong enough to stand on their feet crowded around him, lifting their voices in passionate praise of him, and trying to kiss the edge of his long military coat, now faded and frayed by continual contact with slimy water and débris.

The boat which was to convey him to his yacht ran through the fog-laden dusk and stopped at the foot of a corner of the bastions spared by the fury of the elements upon which he stood, and the splash of the oars warned him that the time of departure had arrived. A smile was on his lips, and I am not at all ready to assert that there was not a tell-tale moisture in his kind blue eyes, as the crowd about him raised a trembling *Eljen* of gratitude and homage.

I could not at that moment help murmuring something to the effect that he should, indeed, be proud and happy on this occasion, whereupon this extraordinary man replied, quite simply and gravely:

*"Pour quoi donc? J'ai fait si peu!"* ("Why that? I did so little!")

I must confess that I looked away for a while from



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the Soldier - Monarch, well proven and war-worn, who had wrought so untiringly and splendidly that his quiet repudiation of praise was something almost pathetic, and that irrepressible tears rose to my eyes.

The fancy fairs, the amateur circus performances, the gorgeous lotteries which the Viennese aristocracy subsequently organized for the benefit of "poor, ruined Szegedin" seemed terribly paltry and meretricious after this, well meant and splendid as they were; but, in emulation of the harmless dove and sagacious serpent, I preserved a discreet silence, donned silks and laces in the sacred cause of charity when occupying the azure and silver booth where I sold flowers and fruit with praiseworthy patience and enormous thrift, slipped into hunting pink to display the prowess of my bay stallion "Fleur de Roy" to the most patrician and bejewelled audience in Europe, took turns with the fascinating Countess Ugarte in leaping hurdles and five-barred gates, and applauded Pauline Metternich's *Séance de prestidigitation* enthusiastically, always with the same admirable object in view; but still all this entrancing glitter made me only think the more of the dull, gray, flooded stretches in and about the wrecked town I had so lately left, and of that one manly, stalwart figure, doing far more for the wretched survivors, with quiet, unemotional and unerring magnanimity, than all this empty, though remunerative, frivolity could ever achieve.

But to go back! On the 18th of February, 1853, all Europe was aroused to amazement and indignation by the dastardly attempt of one Joseph Libenyi, a tailor's assistant from the little Hungarian town of Stuhlweissenburg, to assassinate the young Emperor-King.

Several have since been made by other hands, but that date is not yet forgotten in Austria, and its mere

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mention rouses the impulsive loyal-souled Viennese to imprecations of rage.

What insane desire of notoriety, what mad lust of blood, had prompted this otherwise cowardly brute, or was it merely that evil leaven, that poisonous venom, which, working among the people, begets anarchists, Nihilists, and demagogues, and which, without warning, had gone to his weak, stupid, sartorial head, making him eager to strike down the supremely successful and dearly beloved Monarch he had not so much as even seen from afar previous to that fateful day.

A fit representative, this Libenyi, of a class of people who continually rave about oppression and the wrongs they are made to endure, while they beat their wives to make them work the harder, and send their anæmic little children to the sweat-shop; who loudly clamor for the "rights of man," each one meaning thereby a wider scope for his own low impulses, and who spend their evil lives yelling sedition in drinking saloons, plotting murders, or rolling, dead-drunk, in the gutter, in order to conclusively demonstrate and emphasize their fitness for equality with all that is best and noblest.

Swift has rightly said that to call a man ungrateful is to sum up all the evil of which he can be guilty. Had an Italian—it is generally Italians, I believe, who perpetrate such deeds—been the Emperor's assailant, no great surprise, especially at that time, would have been evinced, but for one of the subjects of this great, kind, and eminently just man to raise his hand against him was ingratitude indeed.

At midday the Emperor, who had as usual already done seven hours' hard work with his secretaries and his *Flügel-Adjutant* dictating, annotating, reading reports, and signing state papers (for indolence or even mere leisure is a thing the untiring, unsparing, over-con-

scientious Monarch never indulges in), swallowed his frugal lunch—invariably served on a corner of his writing-desk and despatched in five minutes—rang for his coat and cap, and walked out with Colonel Count Maximilian O'Donnell, his *Flügel-Adjutant*, for his daily “constitutional” on the inner bastions.

There was but little noise and movement in the neighborhood of the Hofburg at this hour, which, in those days, was that very generally set for dinner, when they stepped past the saluting sentries at a side entrance, and marched off briskly towards the *Kärntnerthor*. It was a chill winter afternoon, and the two tall, soldierly figures, both wearing undress uniforms and long military overcoats, stood sharply profiled against the pale, misty gray of the rasping atmosphere as they stopped for a minute to glance at some newly begun repairs of the bastion beneath their feet.

At that moment a man, with a face stupidly brutal in its lineaments and its dogged, sullen expression, sprang upon the Emperor from behind, and Count O'Donnell's eye caught the flash of a long, pointed knife. For a fleeting instant the Count gazed at the assailant blankly, and almost paralyzed with horror, then, with a bound, he threw himself upon him and hurled him backwards, but, his foot slipping on the frozen pavement, they crashed together to the ground. The Count, putting out all his strength, forced his antagonist down and knelt upon his chest, striking at him furiously with his clenched fist, for he was nearly beside himself at the spectacle he had just witnessed. The knife had fallen from the would-be murderer's hand, and he fought like a wild beast to regain it, but it lay too far from their writhing, closely entwined bodies, and presently, with a clever twist of the wrist, the *Flügel-Adjutant* managed to unsheath his sword. Vainly he tried to

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use its razor-like blade without letting his adversary slip from his grasp, and quite unheeding a curiously weak voice, which he heard but did not comprehend, monotonously repeating, "Put away your sword, O'Donnell; put away your sword."

Fortunately, at this moment, a passer-by, attracted by the turmoil, ran swiftly up, and catching Libenyi by his long, greasy, unkempt hair, banged his head several times violently against the ground, a course of action which had the very natural effect of putting an immediate end to the fight, for Libenyi, who had cut his hands severely in grasping the sword, was not proof against this new and yet severer punishment, and momentarily lost consciousness.

A score of people were now rushing from all sides to the spot, and Count O'Donnell, jumping to his feet, hastened to the Emperor's side; but, to his terror, he saw that the latter was staggering, and that a thin stream of blood, slowly welling out from the back of his neck, had made a broad, rapidly increasing stain on his coat, between the shoulders.

"*Sind Majestät verwundet?*" exclaimed the appalled *Flügel-Adjutant*, throwing his arm about his Imperial master, and looking searchingly at the livid face before him. Then, turning to those who held Libenyi, he cried, fiercely, "Kill the brute! kill the brute!"

Libenyi, who meanwhile had recovered consciousness, and who saw that the death he had wished to deal to another was now nigh unto himself—which is quite another affair—gazed up at the Emperor with wild, passionate appeal, his whole frame shivering, his limbs growing powerless and giving under him like those of a drunken man when he was put on his feet, and cried, hoarsely, "Have mercy on me! O, God! have mercy on me!"

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Francis-Joseph, dizzy and weak from loss of blood, disengaged himself from his rescuer's arms, and with his own kindly smile, just then a little wan, said, gently, "Do not hurt him; he has been badly mauled already."

The crowd cheered vociferously at this characteristic display of magnanimity, and would have escorted him in triumph had he not moved off then, leaning heavily upon Count O'Donnell, and proceeded slowly to Archduke Albrecht's palace, only a few hundred yards distant, motioning his enthusiastic subjects to stand back, and even refusing to let a carriage be fetched. As the two walked away, blood-stained and mud-be-spattered, the Emperor murmured, in allusion to the many recent murders of Austrian soldiers by the people in the streets of Milan, "*Jetzt geht's mir wie meinen armen Soldaten in Mailand!*" (Now I've been served like my poor soldiers in Milan.)

O'Donnell was shaking from head to foot, for he knew well that the wound must be a dangerous one to thus prostrate so strong and stout-hearted a man, and he could not help crying out: "By God! Sir, you should not have spared this fiend!"

The wounded Emperor was by then far too weak, however, to remonstrate or even reply, and fainted away as soon as he reached his uncle's residence. Physicians were, of course, immediately summoned, but long ere they arrived the faithful O'Donnell, fearing that the wound might be poisoned, had sucked it free of all possibility of venom.

It was, indeed, a very narrow escape which Francis-Joseph had just had, for the blow would undoubtedly have been fatal had not Count O'Donnell's quick action caused the knife to swerve and be partly arrested by the buckle of the Emperor's military cravat, thus preventing any more serious consequences than the infliction



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of a deep flesh wound, and a consequent heavy hemorrhage.

When an hour later, Archduchess Sophia heard of his accident as she sat in the spacious study where she wove her fine political nets, and from whence she kept her wary eyes—those brilliant, falcon-like orbs which could often detect what a phalanx of ministers failed to observe—upon every corner of her son's immense Empire, she summoned the Chief of Police to her side, and gave him instructions which filled even this hardened and well-seasoned functionary with awe.

From that day on, moreover, she became sterner, more severe, and more disposed than ever to make, as the French say, "a pair of gloves out of the skin of her most loyal and devoted friend," for the son she had so nearly lost—had he expressed a wish for so unique and unpleasant a hand covering.

She was really constructed of splendidly tempered steel, this amazing Archduchess, and toiled none the less now, in the days of her success, than she had done when wrenching the crown from Ferdinand to place it on the head of its present wearer; nor was she a whit less punctual, careful or methodical. Indeed everything she undertook was done with a conscientious thoroughness, none the less complete because its far-sighted motive was her son's aggrandizement instead of her own, for truly she loved him a million more times than herself.

Her gratitude towards Count O'Donnell was naturally without limit, and she made a point of treating him henceforth as a member of the family, inviting him constantly to luncheon and dinner at the Hofburg, Schönbrunn or wherever else the Court might happen to sojourn, declaring, moreover, to whom it might or might not concern, that she would never again feel that the Emperor was safe from danger excepting when he,



"But the snatcher here below is ubiquitous and eternal, he is likewise protean, and often changes his visible form. Sometimes he is an ugly, brown-faced, greasy-haired Libenyi, sometimes he is a florid and pompous official, sometimes again a trusted and familiar courtier, and by no means necessarily a regicide, but he is always about, ever present and constantly on the snatch about the throne."

"There was so fine and misleading an admixture of mockery and gravity on the Imperial face that the Ambassador felt nonplussed; moreover, he was a Teuton, and the Teuton conception of sarcasm, irony, or what is merely a harmless joke, differs by a very wide span from anybody else's.

"All the same, I would call it uncommonly hard fortune to be born what Your Majesty calls a snatcher, an appellation which I crave permission to find somewhat vague."

"Vague!" cried the Emperor, raising his eyes appealingly towards the blue sky; "I meant it to be vague, and by no means otherwise; Your Excellency's rendering of the word is a complete surrender to my contention. Did I not say that the snatcher was protean, a snatcher of life, of honors, of favors, of— Ah! snatchers are indigenous to the steps of a throne and ineradicable from its vicinity! But what hath all this in common with white peacocks, flowery corbels, and green lawns?" he concluded, dramatically, pointing to the sunny gardens, the high, bending trees, with the glorious sunlight of the late afternoon caught in the green-gold network of their myriad leaves; and seeing the doubtful, almost reproachful *moitié sel, moitié vinaigre* expression of the Ambassador's countenance, he concluded with his ordinary kind smile, from which all trace of mockery had now disappeared. "Ah! *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur*, you

The Ambassador frowned in comprehension. "Your Majesty actually defends him?"—half wonder-  
 ing, half reproachful. "Oh, dear, no," disclaimed his Imperial host; "I don't defend him; I defend nobody. I merely recognize and accept—the ways of the world, the distinction existing between the higher and lower strata—between the snatchers and the—almost snatched! The war is universal, and the trifling incident Your Excellency so kindly refers to is but a miniature presentation of what is going on everywhere in earth and sky."

"Your Majesty!" exclaimed the astounded Ambassador, pulling a long face, "sees the universe through black spectacles, I am afraid."

"Not at all," answered the Monarch. "Regicides—which is using a tall word for a very small offender in this particular instance—are generally content with making a horrid disturbance which in their class redounds to their credit; this variety of snatchers knows the joy of being passionately admired and advocated, but they are poor devils, after all, who do not always get the bread-crumbs they covet and would rend from the—almost snatched, as do, for instance, those royal birds yonder," and he cast the few remaining morsels to the anxious peacocks.

The diplomat arched his brows until they almost touched the fringe of steel-gray hair adorning his high, bland forehead. Clearly he was offended and sorely puzzled.

"I dare not presume to follow Your Majesty on the field of debate, but all the same I trust that Your Majesty does not seriously excuse the ghastly deeds which have from time immemorial disfigured the pages of history." "I hope not," the Emperor said gravely, with the same twinkle of merriment underlying his seriousness.

attack upon the Emperor, at what befell one of the Ambassadors accredited to the Court of Vienna, who, having been absent at the time, believed himself obliged to present to Francis-Joseph himself at the first opportunity his effusive congratulations upon "the auspicious termination of this abominable attempt."

It chanced that the Emperor happened to be engaged in the innocent pastime of tossing bread-crumbs to the white peacocks of the Schönbrunn Park when the diplomat in question respectfully approached to tender those hateful words of felicitation, heard so wearisomely often, and now, since some weeks, so strictly interdicted.

The young Monarch, who was facing away from the advancing Excellency, remained unconscious of his presence until the breaking of a tiny twig made him start and turn about.

A *demi-gala déjeuner* had just ended, one of those splendid affairs which were of amazing heaviness before the Sovereign—always as frugal as an Arab—turned his attention to the reform of the Court menus, and the Ambassador, slightly flushed with good cheer, was in consequence all the more disposed to favor-currying effusion. "Your Majesty," quoth he, pompously, waving his plump hands—"Your Majesty has been but lately almost snatched from our midst by an unprincipled monster! Would to heaven that such foul individuals were once and for all eliminated from the world, that a life so irreplaceable should never again stand in danger!"

"Why distress one's soul with vain wishes?" asked the Emperor, gazing at the diplomat with speculative eyes, in which, however, shone an underglow of mischievous amusement. "Besides, poor Libenyi was hardly a monster. It was in his nature, no doubt, to make a fool of himself; he was born so, and had no chance but to fulfil his destiny."

Count O'Donnell, was at his side. She also presented him with a circlet of superb brilliants, containing a lock of the Emperor's hair, stained with the blood which Libeny's dagger had caused to flow, and on the inside of which was engraved, "*Gott vergelte es Dir!*" (God reward you!)

Indeed, she spoke and wrote so continually of her debt of gratitude to him, that, besides the cross of a Commander of the Leopold Order conferred upon him by Francis-Joseph, he received decorations from almost all the other reigning Sovereigns of Europe, and a man-upria letter from the King of Prussia, which has since become historical.

It would be impossible here to describe the festivities which marked the marvellous preservation of the Emperor throughout Austria, the music, the laughter, the glitter, the illuminations, the salvoes of artillery, the wreaths of flowers, and the floating banners decorating the streets and thoroughfares of gay, light-hearted, enthusiastic Vienna; or even the laying of the first stone of that magnificent fane, *Heiland's (Votiv-) Kirche*, which was consecrated during the fêtes celebrating the silver wedding of Francis-Joseph and Elizabeth in 1879, and which raises so proudly its lace-like twin spires, upon the very spot where the greatest and best Ruler of Austro-Hungary so nearly came to a tragic end. I regret to state, in conclusion of this incident, that, far from being grateful for all the demonstrations which were made on account of his "quasi-assassination"—as he insisted on laughingly denominating it—Francis-Joseph ended by losing his temper pretty thoroughly, and by forbidding the subject to be mentioned again, under penalty of his most emphatic displeasure.

The whole *entourage* was, as a matter of fact, convulsed with laughter, about three months after the murderous

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have received no better than you deserve; let me impress upon Your Excellency once for all that I do not include you, to whom Imperial favor goes voluntarily and naturally, in my nomenclature; therefore, let us hence to see my black swans; we will try them with some crumbs, too!"

This conversation is still cited as a proof of the Emperor's hatred for flattery, even at that time.

## CHAPTER VII

WHAT woman living would have seemed to Archduchess Sophia worthy of becoming the wife of her Imperial son, a proud position in any one's eyes certainly, but in his mother's—of whom the world said that she was fond of imagining the universe created solely that it might have the honor of serving as his pedestal—an absolutely unequalled one; yet she knew that the time was now at hand when he really ought to marry. She had a most ardent desire to see the Habsburg dynasty continued in the person of a grandson; but still she was very clearly aware that his marriage would be to her nothing short of a torture, which, for a person priding herself on a quite remarkable consistency, was assuredly curious.

She was too frank with herself not to realize also that she would hate, positively hate, the most charming of marriageable Princesses as soon as her name was even so much as coupled with that of her son Franz, and her burning sense of proprietorship, her bitter jealousy rose in arms with increasing violence on each separate occasion when she thought of this dread necessity looming upon her horizon.

One may also add that any girl destined to become Archduchess Sophia's daughter-in-law, even did she possess the beauty of Helen, the wisdom of Minerva, the fidelity of Penelope, the virtues of St. Martha, and the genius of St. Cecilia, would need also the dauntlessness of a Joan of Arc, for her lot could, come what happened, be no enviable one.



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The laws of marriage are constructed upon absurd lines, and that is why the sacrament — Holy Mother Church very rashly declares it to be a sacrament—heralds as an almost general rule a lamentable and universal failure. Connubial bliss is not a thing to be obtained by personal ingenuity or retained by mere obedience to precept or to duty. It is the most rare and the most spontaneous thing on earth, born only of the sympathies of two natures mutually sympathetic, and can no more be forced than durable happiness of any sort can be created at will.

And here I have come to the most difficult part of my task, for in my first humble literary effort<sup>1</sup> I have described at such length the matrimonial misunderstandings of Francis-Joseph and Elizabeth, and so clearly laid the blame thereof where blame was due, that to go once more over that thoroughly beaten track would be, I fear, unjust to my readers. But I am so continually accused of not seeing as the world sees, that none will be surprised when I repeat here that it would have been far, far better for the "White Rosebud of Possenhofen" had she never worn the crown placed upon her graceful head by her Imperial lover, when his passionate admiration for her exquisite face and form, her youth and her innocence, transformed, like the wand of Prospero, her simple, pleasurable life into the gorgeous, shining magnificence of an Empress's jewelled existence.

In the mere child, fresh from the dews and fragrant breezes of her forest home, who cared for flowers and birds, for horses and dogs, more than for anything else, this Prince Charming discerned the adorable patrician beauty of the future and rested not till he made it his own; but when, bewildered, afraid, and yet unutterably

<sup>1</sup> *The Martyrdom of an Empress.*

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happy, she let her little hand fall into his, she gave away with it, had she but known it, all hope of peace and of happiness, for few were the days of her joy and wearily long those of her many sorrows.

Whoever has lived in the intimacy of Empress Elizabeth cannot but do full justice to the generosity, the tenderness, and the ever-solicitous gentleness of her husband, and must, in explanation of his share in the causes of her sorrows, refer those who do not understand to divergence of character, the exigencies of life on a throne, and as minor factors his pursuit of new passions; but be all this as it may, even when the first unreasoning delight of the honeymoon had become tempered by time, her love, so pure and so tenacious, her splendid constancy, would have won the battle had it not been for that one implacable, dogged opponent, her husband's mother.

The modern girl, it must be confessed, is a little too *flamberge au vent* in her ideas and attitudes, and is, therefore, quite unable to understand all that this peerless bride felt of bewilderment, shyness, and apprehension in the presence of the sovereign state which had descended on her with such startling suddenness and splendor. It is consoling, however, to think that she would be more fitted than was Elizabeth to cope with the ungovernable passion for interference of a jealous mother-in-law!

This lady's unconquerable love of authority governed the young Empress's destiny from the first, for, like many other women of excessive energy and exclusive attachments, she could not resign herself to abdicate even a tithe of her power and dominion over her son, and her incessant rebukes, reproaches, criticisms, and expostulations to both husband and wife increased the evil day by day, which, like a river widening from its narrow source to a broad estuary, separated more and

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more widely those two fond, foolish young people whose skies would otherwise have probably been cloudless.

Each of her mother-in-law's cross words and cutting hints went to Elizabeth's heart as the stab of a lacerating knife, and one day, when long after all this was a thing of the past, and the wilful Archduchess had for over five years been laid at rest, I ventured to ask the Empress why she had not resisted her influence more strenuously and used her otherwise strong will to retain her own, she replied, sadly:

"Ah, my dear, you do not know what a clever, clever woman she was, and how deeply she could hurt with a look or a word of unkind meaning, how unbearable was her constant suspicion of my every motive or action! From the moment I married she set herself against me, which was quite enough, in those days of her unquestioned omnipotence, to condemn irrevocably any one, even the Empress. Towards her son her honesty of purpose cannot be questioned, even by me, although her methods were sometimes curiously misleading and singularly unscrupulous too. I know she really believed that I was an obstacle on his road to absolute pre-eminence, and that I would take up too much of the time she had decreed that he should devote to statecraft. Moreover, her dislike of me was stronger than her candor or sense of justice, her prejudices greater even than her ordinarily very sincere regard for truth. Then, also, she had the power of swaying him at will in most things, a power which she exercised with contemptuous indifference to all my claims and rights, and her wrath was so bitter at having been momentarily eclipsed in his affections, that at times I think she was scarcely sane on the subject. I have tried since her death to do her fuller justice than I could force myself to do while still she was my mentor, traducer, and bitterest enemy. She

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was, I cannot but own, a magnificent woman, in a hard and superb way — hard in the downward curve of her well-drawn lips, in the beauty of her large, relentless, defiant eyes, hard in her skilful, clever management of everybody, hard in her ambitions and even in her few affections; nay, hard in her whole make-up, with the hardness of rock-crystal, which neither heat nor cold can alter, and you can believe me when I tell you that no force on earth could drag her from a position she had once decided to occupy. One of her first reproaches to me, and delivered with a contempt I never forgot, was when she overheard me explain that when yachting I sometimes hung for hours over the side, because I was sure of some day catching sight of a mermaid under the waves adorned with pink sea-shells and crowned with pale-tinted sea anemones! I was but seventeen then, and yet for years afterwards she continued to taunt me with what she called my ‘apt illustrations of faith,’ and made a point of asking me often, *à brule pour point*, when I intended to come down to the realities of actual, every-day existence and cease to ride the broomstick of illusion! She was not easy to mollify, I assure you; even those who found grace before her eyes were never allowed to know it, and whenever I complained of anything she used to tell me that my life was all prizes and no blanks, except now and then the blank of satiety!”

When this was told me I felt all the disgust of a childless woman for a mother’s implacable jealousy, but now that I have a tall boy of my own, who in a few short years will have reached a marriageable age, God forgive me for saying that, although I do not deny the undoubted nobility of renunciation and withdrawal from the first place in a son’s heart at that painful moment, I feel more in sympathy with Archduchess Sophia, such a confession being, I suppose, greatly to my shame! This

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does not, however, diminish by the thickness of a silken thread my passionate sympathy for my Empress, but still I seriously doubt whether the sense of fair-play which I pride myself on possessing would be quite proof against the fear of allowing myself to be pushed into the background of my son's heart by a girl whose only merit would, at least at first, be mere beauty and physical charm.

This, however, not really being a confession, I will resume my narrative, gliding as swiftly as possible over the exaggeration and invention of the world's judgment concerning the gradual estrangement between the Imperial couple, who during forty-four years were the target for all the arrows of slander.

Throughout that long period it was given to but few to understand Elizabeth's character, ever childlike in its impulses and simplicity, and so unworldly in its estimates, so altogether above the common level in its loftiness of principle, in its horror of everything sordid, mean, or unclean, that after all it is, perchance, unfair to blame the common herd for its inability to comprehend it.

That her course of action, blameless as it ever was, emphasized and darkened her husband's few shortcomings—the shortcomings of a warm heart and a susceptible, generous nature—was an error on her part which none but a very proud, very sensitive woman would have made, but it unfortunately gave color to ill-natured stories and ground to those conjectures concerning the domestic happiness of the Imperial couple, which too often laid the fault at her door.

No one could have suffered more keenly than the Emperor when he found that she was so unjustly blamed, that all her generosity, her countless, thoughtful, tender-hearted acts and her extreme nobility of charac-



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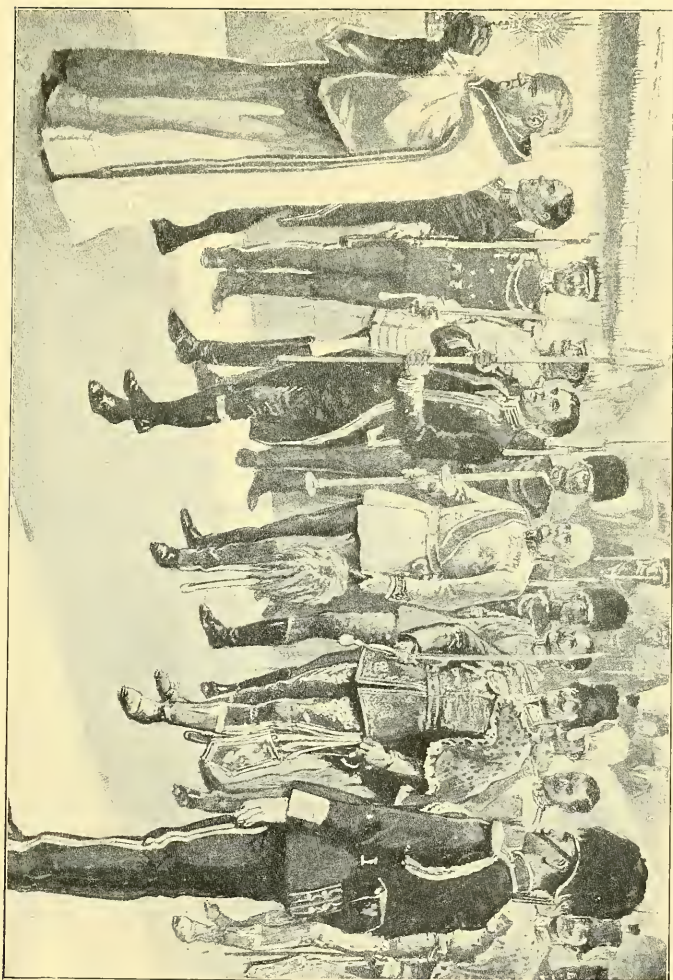
ter failed to atone in the eyes of his Court and people for her delicate disdain of all that commonplace glitter which is covetable to most persons, that she was paying heavily for her lack of pliability, her indifference to popularity, and that he himself, by mere carelessness and too great a subserviency to his mother's counsels, had assisted in humbling the proud heart of a woman who, by her glorious beauty, by the potent and subtle charm of her remarkable intelligence and her unalterable love, exercised over him a sway stronger and more enduring than any other.

Any mother can make her son's life a burden to him if she will conscientiously set herself to do it, especially when this son marries against her wishes. The young husband would be glad to submit to any personal discomfort for the sake of peace in his household, whether it be cottage or palace, but when in the blessed seclusion of his family circle he sees the rack and thumbscrew system of the dear old Inquisition applied in improved and mental modification to his wife, his situation is a singularly unenviable one.

There may be *des accommodements avec le ciel*, but there are no *accommodements* possible with a mother-in-law determined to do her worst, and perfectly convinced that she is in the right, and this is why Francis-Joseph never interfered when his lovely wife, unable to put up any longer with his mother's despotism, would go away for a time upon those foreign travels or long sojourns abroad which made everybody assert that she cared naught for her husband and his Empire, and still less for her duties.

In all his long life Francis-Joseph has been a man of unblemished rectitude, who has never given any one the right to blame or condemn him in matters of the State or of his family honor, but in the conflict of feelings which





THE CORPUS CHRISTI PROCESSION



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agitated him in many of his differences with his wife and mother, he failed to foresee the innumerable consequences and miseries to his wife that would arise from his neglect to look deeper beneath the surface of her easily aroused and umbrageous pride. He did not realize that her heart, in its indignation, its solitude, its general need of sympathy, became shy of turning too obviously towards him for consolation.

Such misunderstandings are fatal, and are apt to haunt one when it is all too late to repair them!

Elizabeth's frequent withdrawals from Court were on many an occasion engendered by a feeling that her husband cared no longer for her, and that he failed to comprehend how she could consider life hard, conventional, artificial, and at times hateful; in which she was for once cruelly mistaken, for he, too, shared these impressions and feelings many and many a time in those days of unceasing and fiery conflict between the two beings he loved best in the world.

There was one scene between Francis-Joseph and Archduchess Sophia on this subject, of which its only witness spoke to me with bated breath nearly a score of years later; for on this single occasion the clash of those two powerful natures proved formidable beyond all that can be imagined.

It took place a few years before the Archduchess's death, when, with advancing age, weariness and dissatisfaction were beginning to dull her finer qualities, and when she more frequently indulged in regrettable suggestion about her unfounded suspicions concerning Elizabeth, to her over-wrought son.

Never had he seen his mother so fully aroused and so reckless in denunciation as she was on that day, and that merely because the Empress had refused to be present at the *Corpus Christi* procession; and yet, never

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had the unfortunate Archduchess loved him more passionately than at that moment, when she felt in his whole attitude the severance of many of the tender ties which had bound him so strongly to her, but she was pitiless in pursuit of her purpose, quite unchangeable in her opinions, and, as ever, absolutely unrelenting in her tyrannical meddlesomeness.

"Is it true!" she exclaimed, angrily, entering unannounced in her son's study, "that you are going to allow your wife to absent herself from Vienna again, and that on one of the rare occasions when her presence is either necessary or desirable?"

Though she was an unusually keen-sighted woman, it had taken the Archduchess a long time to realize how entirely his passion for Elizabeth, when it was permitted to assert itself, swept away and replaced her own influence, and with every new instance of this, to her, cruelly painful truth, she tried with renewed vigor to sap her daughter-in-law's intermittent power, by taunts likely to arouse the Emperor's dislike of being curbed and tied down by any but herself.

She knew that he had never been reconciled to the idea of giving love as a right, also, that the Habsburgs in love or in sport were not wont to tamely submit to be relegated to the background, and by suggesting that Elizabeth led him *par le bout du nez*, she often succeeded in making her interviews with him seriously detrimental to his wife. But on this occasion she had made a bad beginning, and, controlling with difficulty the anger her words aroused, Francis-Joseph said, with strange coldness:

"My wife is not well, and the fatigue of such a function under the blazing sun would be too much for her!"

"Not well? I see that you are her dupe to-day, as you have always been; she is no more sick than I am,

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if you only knew it. No woman who can hunt and swim and walk as she does in all weathers is too delicate to accomplish so simple a duty as the one now demanded of her!"

"You talk and act as if you were her bitterest enemy, my dear mother. You are equally discontented with her whatever she does or leaves undone. God knows that I would not willingly say a word to pain you, for you have to me been an angel of goodness and forbearance, but to my poor little girl you are positively unjust, if you will pardon me for saying so, and whoever hints a word against her hurts me deeply by so doing!"

"I cannot pretend what I do not feel, and it is impossible for those who have your interests at heart to admire the whimsical wax-doll you have been foolish enough to marry!" she replied, furiously.

"Look here, mother!" he cried, passionately, "you are horribly unjust; you are, indeed! you have never ceased to be pitiless in your dealings with "*Lieschen*," or in your efforts to alienate me from her; you speak against her without mercy; you constantly drag her down, dishearten her, inform her of my lapses of loyalty towards herself—you who should be her staunchest friend and my severest critic on such occasions—since you know my many failings, for nothing escapes you!"

The Emperor loved his mother tenderly and reverentially, but he had long ere this become aware that in her relations towards her daughter-in-law she had not displayed her usual wisdom, and that in her prejudiced interference between himself and his young wife she had been extremely ill-advised. To himself, nevertheless, she had, indeed, been a devoted mother, entering into all his troubles and tribulations since the beginning of his arduous reign, just as she had when he was a



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boy entered into all his sports and amusements, his small sorrows and his petty vexations.

A mother who has contrived to be almost always at her son's side when he came to close quarters with life's temptations, sins, virtues, pains, and pleasures, and all its other awful or wonderful realities, cannot be indifferent to his matrimonial relations; it would be asking too much. She had trained him in honor and truth, stimulating his already remarkable energy, instead of repressing and dwarfing him as so many tender mothers do, in order to keep their hold longer upon their dear ones. She had put him to sleep when he was a baby by telling him stories of chivalric deeds and of courtly men in hauberk and corselet, in velvet and point-lace, who all had made their names famous by their contempt for danger, their heroic daring, their unblemished sense of honor, and the consequence of all this was that always ere this day her words had carried more weight with him than anybody else's. This new and entirely unexpected attitude on his part cut her, therefore, to the very heart, but she was not disposed to let him see this, and so she merely smiled slightly—a bitter, contemptuous smile.

She was not blind to the fact that he looked remarkably gallant and handsome with his steady, blue eyes bent grimly upon her, his mouth set as sternly as her own in his chivalric defence of his absent wife, and this led her to think what a pity it was that such a man should be wasted upon a mere pretty, capricious woman, which was her most lenient verdict against Elizabeth.

"I never expected," she said, icily, "to see you satisfied with being chained down in dull, tyrannical domesticity!"

His face grew white with anger and his eyes gleamed, but she took no notice of these threatening signs, and



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calmly continued: "You married in the mad passion of an unguarded hour, for the sake of a few weeks' delight, for what is vulgarly called 'eye-love'—you who were born inconstant, as are all the Habsburgs, by-the-way, and soon the fetters so readily and enthusiastically assumed galled you. You went through the usual period of wrangling and reproaches, you who were least fitted of all men I ever knew to endure such an ordeal. You know as well as I do that your early judgment of your wife was crude, and how quickly the glamour of your *coup de tête* faded in the test of constant intercourse, nor can you deny that you have not found in her what your heart and mind expected to find!"

Twice he tried to interrupt her, which was entirely foreign to his ordinary extreme courtesy and reverence of manner to her, but with a peremptory wave of her slender hand she silenced him.

"I love you too dearly not to feel utterly wretched at the shipwreck of your life or at the false light in which it makes you stand. Elizabeth twirls you around her little finger, makes you do what she likes, and obliges you to yield to her every caprice, not because you love her still very greatly, but, on the contrary, because, being tired of her, you wish to make up in indulgence what you lack in passion!"

This was a perfidious stroke, a veritable *coup de farnac*, and the Emperor threw back his head impatiently, like a mettlesome charger about to take the bit between his teeth, but as before the impassive Archduchess gave him no time for interruption.

"You need not look indignant! The price of marrying a beauty is often very much above that of rubies, but you did not know that when you threw over the immeasurably superior elder sister for her big-eyed, white-skinned, auburn-locked junior. I, however, realized

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how it would be with you, on that night when you waltzed so madly with Elizabeth, whirling her round like a baby, whispering in her ear, and crushing the *Maiglöckchen* of her shoulder bouquet against your breast in the senseless infatuation which had seized you. From that moment you threw all prudence to the winds; you delivered yourself bound hand and foot into her hands; you forgot your future, my warnings, anything, everything, in the momentary delirium, which made you see life with her '*couleur de rose*.' Alas, with such premises my prophesies were certain to come true, and—they have! Your wife is exceedingly beautiful, undeniably so, but I look in vain for any sterling qualities in her, for one saving point of unselfishness or obedience to your wishes or to the exigencies of her high estate!"

She laughed a low, bitter laugh that broke strangely upon his ear, and very quietly, but with teeth set hard, he answered:

"Even you, mother, must not speak in that manner to me. Elizabeth is as worthy of respect and admiration as yourself, and she shall never be mentioned otherwise before me!"

"Respect! admiration! *comme vous y allez!* A woman who will accept but the gilded and jewelled side of her bargain, who shows consideration for nobody, refuses to accomplish a single one of her duties as Empress, as mother, or as wife; really, this is asking rather too much!"

"Nevertheless, it must be so! I ought to have made the fact plainer to you sooner, and now I tell you that I intend to exact in the future for my wife that respect which, thanks to my fear of hurting your feelings, has not always been shown to her!"

The Archduchess rose, pale with astonishment.

"Does my life-long devotion to your interests count for

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so little that you dare to speak thus to me, your mother? Do you choose now to forget all my affection, my unwearing exertions, all I have done, for the sake of a woman of whom, I repeat it, you are heartily tired in spite of her pretty face and seductive coquetries?"

He gave her a look which made even her feel that for once she had gone too far.

"I trust that I will never be base enough to forget what you have done for me, ingratitude not being numbered among my vices, but neither will I forget—nor forgive—what you have just said, nor the harshness, in the mask of justice, the vexatious authority, and the cruel animosity you have untiringly displayed against your innocent daughter-in-law! And now, permit me to leave you; I do not wish to pursue a discussion which can only inflict humiliation and sorrow upon us both, since for the first time in my life I am forced to resent what you say as a dishonor done to myself and to what is dearest to me!"

He bowed low, and left her, mortified, worsted, impotent in her rage and disappointment, but obliged to recognize that there had been even less wisdom than usual in her interference upon this unfortunate occasion.

She sat for a few minutes as one who has been dealt a heavy blow and is unable as yet to realize it; then she descended the stairs, where the moon streamed through painted windows across the broad, crimson-carpeted steps and the exquisitely wrought balustrade, towards her private apartments.

She went slowly, wearily, as if she dragged her dead ambitions with her; her face was very white, her steps reluctant, her heart heavy as lead, for she had the ghastly impression of having said an eternal farewell to the Franz of other days, and of having destroyed the old sweet intimacy which had endured so long between them.

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As she reached her room her stern features suddenly relaxed and softened, and her eyes were filled with unspeakable yearning. Hereafter there would be, if she judged rightly, an immense loss, an unfilled void throughout her remaining life, and tenderness and bitterness strove together in her soul, for she had in the last hour cruelly suffered in her passions and in her indomitable pride. Her son, her own beloved Franz, had judged and condemned her; his wife, whom she hated, had condemned her also; nay, she—even she—had just condemned herself. What was there now left to live for? Deeply perplexed and troubled, she was profoundly humiliated and unspeakably hurt, yet the fairness which was in her nature, beneath all the egotism of her iron self-reliance, at last conquered her terrible sense of offence, and she realized that she had much with which to reproach herself.

Poor Archduchess Sophia! Dreams are for the happy; she would no longer indulge in any, and the one she had dreamed so long was now dead, dead as a drowned creature lying many fathoms deep at the bottom of the sea. For a little while her agony was greater than even she had strength to bear; for this last experience had been of the kind which strips the heart bare and unveils the innermost recesses of the soul, and the wound inflicted was one which would never close.

The infinite peace of the night seemed to lie like a benediction on the immense, silent palace, but she knew that in her bruised, weary heart there was no peace and never would be more—in that heart where but one name, her son's, had ever been written; and she wept bitterly the burning, inconsolable tears of those whom age has already touched with its blighting wand and who have but little left to hope for. Once again, nevertheless, she steeled herself, gathered the remnants of her

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pride about her, coldly and hardily, and with a strong effort of self-control effaced, as she believed, every outward trace of the tempest which had overborne her, ere she reappeared before the partisans and antagonists to whom she scorned to betray any emotion. But all becomes very swiftly known at Court, and her sufferings would not have been lightened had she been aware that by night the defeat of *Madame Mère* was discussed in whispers all over the Hofburg.

How long ago all this took place, and yet how present still to the minds of those who witnessed the eighteen-year-long struggle between the mother and the wife of Francis-Joseph, in those days when the phrase, *Vox Sopiæ vox Dei*, was a familiar saying at Vienna!

Are they now reconciled, those rivals, both so differently beautiful and gifted—the one, untiring in her devotion, and the other, unfaltering in her love—the imperious mistress of statecraft, who scarcely deigned to conceal her power behind the throne, and the noble woman who sat upon it, her sweet head bowed beneath the weight of her crown?

Their place knows them no more; they are gone like the snows of past winters that have drifted silently upon the cloister roofs beneath which, closed in darkness, they lie together. “*Mais où sont les neiges d’antan?*”

Tell me, sprites of a twilight name,  
Dwelling under what sky of gold  
Is Archippa of antique fame,  
Flora, Thaïs, of lovely mould?  
Over the evening waters cold,  
Echo, bowered in fern and rose,  
Laugheth low to the question old,  
“Ah! and where are the winter snows?”

Where is Héloïse—scorning blame  
All for love of the wise and bold,

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All for Abélard, sunk in shame,  
Shut in Saint Denys' cloistered fold?  
Where the queen at whose mandate rolled  
Seine o'er Buridan's head? There blows  
Far faint answer across the wold,  
"Ah! and where are the winter snows?"

Lissome Blanchefleur, the siren dame,  
Alys of Le Mans' warrior hold,  
Jeanne—alas! to the English flame  
Doomed at Rouen, betrayed and sold,  
Berthe *au grand pied* of whom is told  
Oft the story in rhyme and prose,  
Where is their beauty enshrined and scrolled?  
"Ah! and where are the winter snows?"

Live thy day that the Fates have doled  
Lady, lest when the question goes  
Where thou art, be the answer trolled,  
"Ah! and where are the winter snows?"

M. M.



## CHAPTER VIII

APRIL 29th, 1859! Yet another of those dates which should be marked in darkest hue on Emperor Francis-Joseph's life-calendar, for again a great tumult sounded throughout his Italian provinces, and was borne nearer and nearer to the Austrian border, like the roar of a suddenly surging sea, sending its muffled but ominous echoes to far-away Vienna.

Lombardy and Venetia were athirst for freedom, and the tramp of the Austrian army of occupation, ringing upon the pavements of their cities, had become unendurable to the sons of those sun-girt lands.

Victor-Emmanuel of Sardinia, who, more prudent than his father had been in 1849, now allied himself with that king of adventurers, Napoleon III., took the field—paradoxical as it sounds—as the defender of the Republican party, and their combined forces of one hundred and eighty thousand men came down to confront Austria's army, which consisted at the outset of the campaign of not more than one hundred and ten thousand!

Again the flowery plains, the soft, green meadows of Lombardy, the deep vine shadows and the sweet mountain stillness of Tuscany, flecked with the royally blue irises of Dante—those irises blossoming in such extravagant profusion in the maize crops and on the olive slopes alike—again the pearl-hued lagoons of dreamy Venice, the poplar and acacia-shadowed Brenta, the golden millet fields, and narcissus-scented pastures of the Veneto were convulsed by the old war-cry, "*Vivá la libertà!*"

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and the zest for slaughter which had burned so fiercely ten years before broke out with renewed vigor in the Austrian as well as the Italian ranks.

When Francis-Joseph received the news of the defeat at Magenta, a terrible bitterness and a wellnigh unendurable pain overcame him. Hardly could he believe his senses and realize the extent of this misfortune.

His wife, his mother, his whole family and *entourage* were amazed and terrified by the unnatural calm and the set, repressed anguish which made him look as if he had suddenly been changed into stone.

This shame, netting him tight, was the cruellest suffering he had as yet undergone; even when he had seen the small, waxen face of his first-born, Archduchess Sophia's tiny namesake, pillowed in the snowy roses of her little coffin, his pain had not been so great.

He was silent, because had he spoken all the courage, all the self-control that pride and high-breeding sustained in him, would have been utterly shattered.

Another moment given to pull himself together, and the chivalrous pride, the resourceful endurance, the knightly instinct that were in him flashed into fire and leaped into action, and all he felt, all he thought, was to fly to the rescue, and to lose his life like the soldier and the noble gentleman he was, rather than that in his absence his armies should be vanquished.

The Habsburg blood, that never took well to defeat, was aroused now, and the prospect of fighting thrilled through him with glad energy, and without another instant's pause or backward look he determined to take over in person the command of his troops.

Yet his eyes fell sadly upon his young wife, whose auburn head nestled upon his shoulder, the fragrance of whose lips breathed so near his own, and who at that minute would have joyfully given all her Imperial state,

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her matchless jewels, her countless privileges; ah! yes, would even readily have shorn off the marvellous tresses of which she was so proud, to keep him with her a few weeks, a few days longer.

His voice was low, his smile very gentle, as he tried to comfort her; his hand held hers in a tender clasp, and she could feel his heart beat loud and quick against her own as his lips touched her brow, where she stood within the circle of his arms, a nervous shudder running through her frame, heavy tears stealing down one by one, and falling like dew-drops upon the cluster of violets at her breast.

Archduchess Sophia, although bitterly hurt as usual, when not considered first, stood beside them without a trace of her customary stern rebuke of manner, and on noticing this the Emperor's face lightened with a pleasure and a relief that changed it wonderfully, his blue eyes darkening and gleaming strangely as a swift hope came to him of sweetness and peace, during an absence which might last perhaps forever, reigning between the two beings dearest to him on earth, and replacing the bitter strife or the icy coldness which alternated between them since five long years.

Our natures are oddly constructed and oddly inconsistent. Archduchess Sophia hated her daughter-in-law, yet it gave her many a bitter pang that she should not have turned to her for comfort when the man whom they both loved so exclusively and passionately had left them alone together, but her social philosophy—if philosophy it was—and her unimpaired imperiousness allowed no sign of this curious feeling to escape her, even when sleeplessness, anxiety, misery, and the despair of such a separation had made Elizabeth look like a lovely little white ghost, and when even she, "Sophia the Pitiless," pitied her from her very heart.

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Francis-Joseph went straight to Verona. A sorry, desolate city during the warring days that followed, and which in that hot June seemed drowned in white dust, and very dreary, with its lofty, empty houses, its crumbling *palazzios*, its frightened inhabitants, skulking away in terror at the sight of every "white-coat."

Little, however, did the Emperor notice the dusty wretchedness of Juliet's birth-place, the pitiable ravages wrought by time, neglect, and plunder, nor its dreary, dirty, dismal comfortlessness, for his destiny was rushing him headlong into a far deeper and more impenetrable gloom than that which obscured those sombre, narrow streets and *piazzettas*, lined with rows of stunted, sickly trees, crippled by the simoom-like, scorching wind which blows almost constantly from the mountains.

Heaven forefend that I should attempt to write a description of that fateful battle, over which the colors of France, Italy, and Austria waved, where Francis-Joseph, Victor-Emmanuel, and Napoleon III., surrounded by the flower of their armies, fought with such deadly results that the carnage of that day is still alluded to with awe, and during which the combatants grappled with such ferocity in hand-to-hand struggle that even in the embrace of death the bleeding, exhausted, quivering men rolled over each other in such an inextricable tangle and confusion that they had to be buried as they fell, still clutching one another's throats.

Those who fought then and survived never quite got out of their ears the thunder, the turmoil, the deafening roar—shaking the very earth with its dreadful echoes—that they heard that day, nor out of their eyes the look of the battle-field of Solferino, packed so closely with dead and dying that the blood-soaked ground, crimson and noisome, was scarcely visible, the wounded, in horrible companionship with the torn and scorched corpses of

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those killed by the near explosion of shells, writhing in torture and shrieking wildly for a help that never came to them!

Scenes, indeed, to make the strongest man, the bravest soldier, reel and stagger with disgust and pity amid the hiss and crash and shock of this sanguinary struggle of more than three hundred thousand men!

A devil rose in me every time I heard about it! alas, in my but poorly tamed nature it still rises when I remember what my father, who was present, told one day to a friend of the heroic fight of Solferino, little guessing that crouching behind a curtain I was listening to what naturally I but barely understood then, yet heard, with my little teeth clenched and my baby heart beating hard against my ribs at these horrors which had taken place three years before ever I was born!

What a sight it must have been on the morning of that decisive day, when the rising sun glittered on a forest of lances, sabres, and bayonets, and turned the gay accoutrements of the cavalry into a glorious mass of color; when the silvery sound of trumpets rang merrily through the clear air!

What a night, when a pitiless, drenching downpour of ink-black, smoke-tainted rain soaked through those poor, mutilated wretches, heaped up, with twisted limbs and distorted faces, like the carcasses of sheep in a slaughter-house, under the added misery of that furious storm, which followed shot and fire with such awful suddenness!

The story of that battle has been oft and well told, and none, neither the Italians, the French, nor even the Garibaldians—a race apart, since bloodthirstiness and love of eternal strife and of anarchy have caused them to take a hand in nearly every conflict in which they have been allowed to mingle—have denied the fact that among



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those splendid fighters of many different nationalities none displayed greater courage and *sang-froid* than the young Emperor and *generalissimo* of the Austrian phalanxes.

Fear was always to him unknown, but on that day his courage can be called by no milder name than heroism, and the rashness with which he exposed his life filled all who were at his side with a sort of awe, for to escape without a scratch from such perils, he must, indeed, have borne a charmed life.

But why dwell on the boundless calamity by which Francis-Joseph was overtaken! One could write and write and write, and yet not convey any adequate idea of the hot, angered sense of adverse fate which filled his soul throughout that disastrous campaign, and especially of the hours of agony he spent at Solferino, watching with dry, strained eyes, like one numbed and stupefied, the annihilation of his regiments, vainly searching the horizon with his field-glasses to the east and west, the north and the south, for something in sight that could give him aid or hope.

Idle it is, indeed, to dwell upon so great a grief, so deep a humiliation, or to attempt a lengthy mention of the despair which finally made him eager to die because wellnigh all else but life itself was lost to him, and impelled him to walk his charger slowly to the front of battle under so merciless a hail of fire and shot that all those about him were falling in swarms. Yes, walk, quite calmly and determinedly, checking at last his fretting, terrorized horse with one brutal twist of his iron wrist, to stand gazing blindly before him, like a man lost in the darkness, too sick at heart, too weary, too filled with horrible agony, to ask aught but death from the cruelly chastising hand of fate, and yet half doubting whether this misery, this burning, degrading



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humiliation were not, after all, perchance, the mere visions of a waking nightmare.

How the hours that followed this mad attempt to be killed, and thus redeem the shame of his defeat, were spent, Francis-Joseph could never recall in full. Vague memories remained with him of being forced away from his untenable position, of seeking, by dint of bodily fatigue, to kill at least the torturing thoughts rising in him, of watching the lurid light of the setting sun as he had done eleven years before at Santa Lucia, but with an infinite sense of irreparable loss, of endless calamity upon him, which had assuredly not pressed upon his soul in those by-gone days of youthful enthusiasm and triumph, and of ever and anon being roused to the consciousness of the weight of shame which had just rolled in upon him like the towering waves of some furious sea that sweeps all before it.

Fortunately there are, in the list of the world's infinite sorrows, but few such as that which weighed upon Emperor Francis-Joseph on the night that followed the great battle.

The unfortunate Sovereign thought then that no greater ordeal could have been laid upon him, but, though he staggered under it, yet when the Italian provinces were forever lost to the Empire, when the blood-tinted smoke of Solferino lifted from his horizon, he still stood erect with his old dauntlessness; his spirit unbroken, his fortitude reconquered; and his youth—he was only twenty-nine—which made him feel the stroke so keenly, gave him also strength for that greater blow when, in 1866, the Prussians added Königgrätz to the already then so lengthy list of his sorrows. Then, indeed, his heart almost broke in this supreme and paralyzing horror, and quivering in the helplessness and anguish which even his noble nature could not vanquish, his unwaver-

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ing heroism conquer, he came nigh to draining his cup of bitterness to the dregs, and in a few hours lived a martyrdom which crushed and maimed his very soul.

Among his most trying experiences, in connection with the Six Weeks' War, was the reception at Vienna of those German Sovereigns who, in consequence of their having espoused his cause against the Prussians, had been driven from their dominions, and in several cases deprived of their thrones. Each one of them was welcomed at the railroad-station on their arrival with all sovereign honors—the blind King of Hanover, who had fought with such heroism at the Battle of Langenzalza, and his son, the Crown-Prince, now so well known and liked throughout Austria as the Duke of Cumberland, the aged King of Saxony, the surly and cantankerous Elector of Hesse, and the Duke of Nassau, who, after a quarter of a century spent in delightful exile at Vienna, was to recover, not the throne that he had lost, but another, namely, that of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. The Emperor, realizing as he did that they had risked their crowns for the sake of their friendship to Austria and the House of Habsburg, felt that each of these drives to receive them to and from the railroad-station was a painful pilgrimage indeed.

Not yet, however, had he reached the summit of his Calvary. All was not said and done, nor had the sword that was to doubly pierce the very roots of his being as yet fallen, had he only known it; but God, in His mercy, has hidden the future for us, else few would care to go on living.

Under the green leafage of Schönbrunn, harmonious with the melody of innumerable song-birds—amid the cool, fountain-splashed parterres and velvety lawns, so sweet and full of peace and fragrance, so entrancingly beautiful after the scorched, blood-stained Italian plains,

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where so many of Austria's sons had found a heroic death—the dazzling creature who was his wife gave a deep-drawn sigh of joy when once she had him back, when his arms were about her again, and her head rested on his breast.

The keenest pain can be lulled to sleep by a great love; and in the intoxication of finding her more tender than she had ever been before, in the second honeymoon which followed his return, he found a momentary forgetfulness of the memories which haunted him, and was almost happy again—almost, I say it advisedly, for he never could wholly cast aside the sickening sense of all the slaughter of life and pride he had witnessed and sustained at Solferino.

Light and coloring, the transparent shadows of leafy depths, the fragrance of countless blossoms, the sparkling spray of *jets d'eau* were a fitting frame for this short *renouveau* of mutual love and understanding, a becoming background for the lovely face and form of his Elizabeth, looking now so proudly at him out of her great, deep eyes; but the rose-garlanded terraces of Schönbrunn were not secluded enough in their opinion, and so they withdrew to the solitude of Laxenburg and fell to watching the silvery rays of the moon lighting the foliage, the rolling *charmilles*, the glancing lily-studded waters of the lake, or lost themselves amid the shadowy green of the fair summer landscape, enjoying, for once, in all its fulness and quite unhindered, that love which comes but rarely to ennoble, soften, and endear life.

He was wholly her own now; and when he looked upon the extraordinary fairness of her face he felt that she was the one woman he had loved or would ever really love with that passion which is of the mind and heart as well as of the senses, that she shared his life as no other would ever share it, that the world held no sweeter

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music than her voice, and that his pride was wholly centred in her matchless beauty and goodness, in her sovereign grace and charm; for during those short weeks of absolute bliss there seemed to radiate about this exquisite woman and this man, bruised and stunned by an almost insupportable blow, an effulgence, pure, cloudless, glorified, God-sent, and which neither of them ever forgot.

Neither of them thought now of the patrician, seductive, dusky-eyed blonde who, according to the *chronique scandaleuse* of the Court, had been more or less favored now and again, until the dark shadow of war had relegated to oblivion both the cause and the effect of this gossip.

The persevering lady, persevering in her purpose as in her unimpaired charms, still enjoyed posing as the wife and victim of a Caliban, but she had given up being quite as over-careful about violating conventionalities as when she was still little more than a bride, and she had become very "rapid" indeed, in a quaint, languid, poetic, inimitable manner, which was excessively attractive to the strong sex. She could with justice pique herself on her skill, and there was a champagne draught of mirth and mischief in her coquetries, a half-reckless, half-scientific chic about her which few could resist.

This *charmeuse par excellence* still held her place securely, nevertheless, in the highest rank of the most fastidious and exclusive Court of Europe. To be distinguished by her was still an honor; and the chains she cast about men were made of roses; but, for all that, her cleverly tinted presentation of a *femme incomprise* chimed less harmoniously with the rest of her now more dashing methods, which was a pity, for the *première manière* had been far better suited to her style.

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But, for all that, the cruel stroke of doubt and of jealousy had not struck the less near home, and gentle though Empress Elizabeth's nature was, beyond all forgiveness was the little triumphant smile with which her wicked rival had tantalized her for so long wherever they chanced to meet—a smile which galled her more than any knowledge of the fancied or real flirtations in other directions so ruthlessly reported to her, for this woman had been, she knew, her Franz's first infatuation, and in this she saw a particular danger to herself.

The halcyon days after his return from the war were all the more precious to the young wife because she so greatly feared that a season, a month, a few hours, might be the only respite of a full quietude left her, the only pause between perfect bliss and the fiat of desolation, of anxious, restless misery she already knew so well; for Elizabeth, in the midst of all that was highest, fairest, greatest, and most bewitching, surrounded by the incessant whirlpool of pleasure and splendor of her husband's brilliant Court, felt utterly alone, utterly wretched, utterly beggared and downcast, when these doubts and jealousies, which stung her like scourges, assailed her.

Walking with him in the park at Laxenburg—that fairy castle which mirrors its ivy-hung façade, its peaked turrets, its stone balustrades covered with the broad, lustrous leaves of creepers and the profuse blossoms of twining roses, in the smooth waters of its encircling lake—her irresistible loveliness sweeping over him like the intoxication of some penetrating fragrance, feeling without the chance of a doubt that she had drawn him at last completely within the charmed circle of her power, she was so absurdly happy that she involuntarily thought of Friar Laurence's prophetic



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"These violent delights have violent ends,  
And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,  
Which as they kiss consume!"—

and this often caused her eyes to rest upon him with a mournful tenderness she could not conceal, nor he, alas, fail to understand.

The stamp of their bitter fate was still upon them in a sort of hazy fashion, for the wounds they had both received were too recent to be entirely closed—healed they never were quite, as I have already said. To him the memory of his defeat, of all the gallant-hearted men who had gone out so cheerily to their death, and whose bodies had fallen so thickly among the crushed lavender bushes and uprooted olive plantations of Solferino, was far too fresh not to still make him wince, while to her the thought of Archduchess Sophia's sweeping contempt was like a menace looming over her future; and yet—and yet—those sweet hours of reprieve were an ever-renewed delight, which nothing could really spoil or overshadow.

One night they had stepped out upon the terrace to watch the soft ripple of the moon on the water, the scintillating of the stars repeated in diamond-like sparks between the pale-green spots of the floating lily-pads. There was no sound save the soft, sweet gush of the nightingale's songs close by, in a mass of foliage spangled with bloom, and the gentle breath of a faint breeze ruffling the great, dark draperies of ivy behind them.

Such an hour is rare in any life; in theirs it was almost unique.

All the Emperor's reawakened passion stirred at the sight of the delicate, smiling face of his young wife, now quite her own radiant self again, and who, when she



lifted her lustrous eyes to his, betrayed so naïvely her joy and her love that his heart grew heavy with conscious remorse.

Perchance, he thought of that moment when, with unconquerable emotion, he had slipped over her slender finger the golden badge of woman's servitude as she knelt by his side at the altar, her retinue of Royal and Imperial bridesmaids behind her; of the exquisite young face and form seen to full advantage for the first time through showers of priceless bridal lace; of the trusting, almost pathetic adoration of her glance as she shyly peeped at him through her filmy veils, and of the fond, proud, whispered words of tender encouragement he had murmured to her as they had passed out of the dazzlingly illuminated, flower-filled Court Chapel, between the bowing rows of their courtiers—joined together for life, "for better or worse," whatever ill, whatever joy might come, with no possibility to ever unsolder the chains forged by Holy Mother Church.

"For better, for worse!" Poor little girl—great Empress though she was—had it not been already too often "for worse"!

He bent over her with the deepest tenderness she had ever awakened in him.

"Elsie!"

It was only one short word, but it was also the name he used rarely when they were quite, quite alone, in moments of absolute abandon.

She started slightly, and clung to him, while he threw his arms about her and drew her very close, pressing his lips passionately to hers.

"My little Elsie! my sweetheart! my own, precious darling!" he murmured. "I have not always been as kind to you as you deserve; but it was not from lack of love. Will you believe that, at least?"

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"Hush! hush!" she whispered, with a fleeting upward glance into his eyes, where tears had risen, and then a swift, almost frightened droop of her graceful head upon his heart.

She was too deeply moved, too shy of this renewed joy to speak, and for many minutes she could not even tell him that all her trust and confidence had been resurrected by what he had just said.

At last, he spoke again.

"You cannot realize all I have suffered, all my temptations, all my struggles. I am not trying to excuse myself, my dearest one! I know too well how wrong I have been; but I wish to throw from my conscience a heavy burden, heavier far since your merciful forgetfulness of your wrongs, your noble generosity in not once alluding to them in our present solitude. My own love! what words can tell you all you have always been and will always be to me, nor how I missed you and thought of you constantly throughout this long, heart-breaking campaign! I must have been mad at Solferino. I longed to fall in the field, but not a bullet would hit me. Austria beaten! I did not know how to endure it. I remember that when I rallied my poor soldiers at the last, the remainder of those brave men whom death alone had vanquished, I cried: '*Vorwärts, Ihr Braven, auch ich habe Weib und Kind zu verlieren!*' and the thought of you and of our little ones gave me a sudden renewal of strength and of hope, just as my words urged my troops on to such acts of valor that MacMahon is reported to have said afterwards: '*Encore une victoire comme celle-la et nous rentrerons en France sans armée.*' I prayed for death after that, Elsie; I prayed for death, prayed as I never prayed for anything else in my life; and yet I am no coward. But there are sights and thoughts that may well turn men insane, and which

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are only lived through at the cost of every quivering nerve and fibre of one's being!"

She shuddered. What comfort had she to give him for such recollections? She could only cling to him tighter, and vow that henceforth she would try to make his life happy again.

It was then that Elizabeth really first learned the depths of tenderness, gentleness, and affection of her husband's nature, and all he whispered to her on that blissful night was a dearer remembrance than aught else in the bitter years that followed.

They stayed long in love's delicious solitude, under the clear, twinkling stars, and she was so happy, leaning, in her snowy draperies, against her tall, stalwart, reconquered lover, that she thanked God aloud for this new delight which had come into her life, tears of pure rapture wetting her long lashes; and that when nearly twenty years later she told me of the pathetic little scene I have just tried to describe, her voice trembled and her glorious eyes filled at the mere memory of it.

When they re-entered the castle that night there was such gladness in her face, so fond a smile on her lips, and so exquisite a flush upon her velvety cheeks that he told her he had never seen anything so beautiful as she. And he was a connoisseur!

And what do you think that she, in her extraordinary humility, had replied to his confession, to his bitter self-reproaches, to his passionate admiration of her pure stainlessness and goodness?

"Oh! I have so little merit. An Empress is so fenced in and guarded that she can do no wrong, at least no serious wrong, even if she wished it, and I never did! While a man, especially when he is a high and mighty and handsome Sovereign like my Franz, is assailed on all sides by temptations. It is the women who are to

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blame, the wicked temptresses!" and she clenched her little, pearly teeth fiercely as she thought of all those Circes pursuing him with their wiles and allurements!

This portion of their conversation was told me by him. They liked, those two, to talk of their few happy memories to a real sympathizer.

So easily does a loving woman forget her past sorrows in present joys, that the bitterness so long felt by Elizabeth was entirely dissipated in the beauty of this new existence, and she could, from her heart, say what few can boast of—namely, that life at least had given her a brief period of wellnigh cloudless joy.

This short Imperial holiday passed away only too quickly for the young couple, bright from the minute when the sun peeped rosily through the gauzy mists of dawn, until the evening star had sunk to rest behind the dew-laden trees of the Imperial Park.

"You will love me always like this now—promise?" whispered Elizabeth on their last evening at Laxenburg. "Never less tenderly, never less faithfully?"

She paused with a little sob of fear and joy. He clasped his arms about her tightly, passionately, murmuring fond promises in her tiny ear, for just then he loved her with a tenderness intensified by the poetical and absolute solitude which for the first time in their married life had completely surrounded them, by the sweet hours spent in perfect union, and by her own unexpected gentleness and generous restraint from either taunt or reproach.

Long did he hold her in his arms as if no earthly power could rend her from him, and, clinging closely to him, she looked up in his eyes, with all her faith and her confidence restored, and with not a trace of past shadows upon her sweet, tender face.

It was piteous, I have been told, when once more all

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joy had been crushed out of her life, all hope and trustfulness destroyed, to see her awake from this fair dream, awake to the utter barrenness of her desolate future—a piteous sight, indeed, I readily believe! Young, pure, devoted as she was, and wronged in her fondest trust, as she thought and believed that she had been, she suffered as few have done.

Her wild bursts of sorrow, the agony of her terrible fits of despair, her subsequent dull, mute, hopeless anguish, her health stricken and broken down, the fears at one time entertained for her reason and even her life, her flight to Madeira, induced by the whirl of thoughts and feelings, doubts and fears, which made her touch the very bitterness of death—I have set all this down in *The Martyrdom of an Empress*, much to the displeasure of those who would have considered it more fitting, in every respect, and more convenient also for them, to let sleeping facts lie—in more senses than one—so that they still could cast all the blame of what seemed at times difficult to explain in her conduct upon her own shoulders, even after death had parted her alike from friends and foes.

But what matters it all now?—excepting in so far as the object of this present work is concerned, which is to turn the other side of the medal towards the public in justice to the so grievously bereaved husband, and to his mother as well. The whole blame, the whole and entire responsibility of the Empress's martyrdom, the unending misery of one of the fairest and proudest lives which ever left the hand of Almighty God, should not fall on those two alone, for there were others who should, in fairness and justice, be added to the list of her unhappy fate's artificers—others who played the part of lying informers, and who urged on Archduchess Sophia's prejudice by pure inventions about her unfortunate daughter-



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in-law, hoping thereby to curry favor—who poured out drop by drop, cleverly, shrewdly, and scientifically, the poison which worked, and worked in its iniquitous potency, and bit like the strongest acid into Elizabeth's heart, while she could only wait inactive, hoping that justice might some day be done to her—a mercy which was, however, refused.

Also she suffered many other torments besides those created by injustice and jealousy: the agony of bereaved motherhood, and the cruel pain before that last and supreme sorrow befell her, of seeing her only and beloved son's life wrecked by the bitter disappointments and disillusion his marriage brought him.

Elizabeth was sensitive to an extraordinary degree, and the hostile attitude of wellnigh every member of her Court and entourage threw her from cold surprise to nervous apprehension, which made her own manner, by no means always cordial, like that, indeed, of a person standing off, shut in, withheld.

There is a fallacy to the effect that the tongue is woman's weapon, even as the fist is man's. Experienced and sagacious people can, however, tell quite another tale—that men are quite as ready as women to employ the one first mentioned, the feminine one, which is by far the deadlier of the two, for it breaks hearts instead of bones, and can be used with incredible savagery. Both sexes are alike in this, and there is small choice between them. Any one who lived in Vienna during the life of the Empress, even as a visitor from foreign parts, is familiar with the disgraceful stories circulated about her, and with the yet more iniquitous reasons alleged for her so-called coldness to her husband, retailed by high and low in twenty different octaves. Had these wiseacres been granted the power



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of analyzing Elizabeth's true character, they would have found out the reason of this alleged coldness.

She never, never, never could understand that her husband's nature, alive and vigorous, rebelled against the laws of marriage, the constant fetters binding this often sorely tempted, singularly attractive man to one love and one fealty, nor that he was made for passions which her delicate pride, dainty chilliness, and excessive refinement could not even apprehend; and that his very manliness clamored for rights and for a freedom which women of her stamp never dream of. She was so constant herself that to her it was incomprehensible that when she did not stand beside him, her soft little fingers holding his, the charm and seduction of her presence permeating the very air he breathed, she lost all power to hold him to his bonds; and that it was when thus unguarded by her immediate influence that he may perchance have occasionally strayed from the narrow and difficult path of absolute fidelity.

This and this alone after the death of Archduchess Sophia was the reason of her intermittent fits of coldness, of her absences (which, as he had formerly allowed, he could not afterwards well forbid), of their piteous misunderstandings — misunderstandings complete, frequent, and at times cruel.

This was what caused all the pain and the trouble between two admirable human beings formed for each other's joy, whose hearts and souls God had joined together, before man or woman had taken a hand in the matter, and in the usual meddling, pharisaical way had spoiled their lives.

And yet, I shall maintain it to the end, that she and she alone had the power to strike far down into his heart, and to stir it to its very depths, for his love for her was not the "love" which most men consider a mere amuse-

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ment, like gambling or drinking, *pour passer le temps*, but a noble, generous, high-souled tenderness of supremely lofty essence, lavishing upon her a fondness of unequalled and unutterable value. Unfortunately, she wanted more than that; not more than she herself gave, however, for he was all the world to her, but more than he could give, since it was unwearied, unceasing, eternal, and utter constancy which she demanded.

Elizabeth was the pearl of women, the cleverest, the loveliest; and because she committed the one error of measuring others by her own standard she antagonized many who could no more comprehend or appreciate her than a blind worm can feel the colors of the rainbow. It is discouraging even to try and explain her out as I am doing now, because it is so impossible a task; the only things worth writing about her are inexpressible, the only things that can be written and made clear seem so obvious and worthless, a very crackling of thorns in the fire. To what end, then, shall I make further speech, on that subject, save to give myself an aching heart? She and her humble chronicler are companions in misery no longer. Our losses subserve another's gain, and she has now gained her reward of justice and peace.

I have never been able to understand why the fangs of calumny have fastened themselves with such extraordinary and uncalled-for tenacity on the House of Habsburg, not a single member of which has been spared by the venomous tongues and equally venomous pens of people "who knew not what they said," and who were not even turned from their nefarious course by the terrible misfortunes so nobly and courageously borne by both the late Empress Elizabeth and by her husband.

Ever since the foul assassination of that peerless woman, the wearisome hurdy-gurdy of sensationalism has been grinding out new tunes, evoked from old themes,

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and now taking for their *Leit-motif* a man whom grandeur of character and loftiness of purpose should have safe-guarded against such unfounded and base attacks, and a woman whom an unhappy life and a miserable death might also have shielded, if her beauty, goodness, and purity were not sufficient to insure her immunity, from wilful misconstruction and post-mortem scandals.

The fact that the Emperor is a man, made of flesh and blood, as well as a great Monarch, and therefore possessed of the feelings and qualities as well as of a few of the failings and frailties inherent in human nature, constitutes no excuse for misconstruing every one of his actions.

Among other singularly unjust charges laid at his door was that of having elevated to the rôle of a *Madame de Pompadour* that popular favorite of the Viennese public, Katharina Schratt, the celebrated actress of the Imperial Burg-Theatre.

All one can say of this accusation is that it is perhaps one of the least founded and one of the most ridiculous of the many with which Francis-Joseph has been overwhelmed.

A few words of explanation, moreover, are all that is needed to prove this beyond the possibility of a doubt.

Born in the delightfully picturesque little town of Baden, near Vienna, Katharina Schratt, from early childhood, gave promise, not only of becoming a beautiful and very charming woman, but also a great artist. Nor were these promises vain, for shortly after leaving the Conservatoire, her appearance at the Viennese Stadt-Theatre created a sensation, and her attractive face and form, as well as her naïve, sympathetic, and totally unaffected diction, placed her from the beginning on a par with the most famous *ingénues*.

All hearts went spontaneously out to her, and her

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successes as an actress were wellnigh without number. Strange to say, her reputation remained absolutely unsullied. Of admirers she had many, but in her own merry, witty, delicate way she compassed the difficult task of keeping them at a distance, while still retaining them as devoted friends.

This was all the more meritorious, as her salary was at first naturally not excessive and her expenses very large; but this bizarre young woman refused all possible offers of "friendly" loans with so much decision that a singular halo of purity enhanced her manifold charms, and that she was nicknamed by clubmen "the Snow Flower."

Her debts, however, accumulated; and when, in 1883, Adolph Wilbrandt engaged her for the Imperial Burg-Theatre, although she was the acknowledged queen of the Viennese *Lustspiel*, her financial affairs were at a singularly low ebb.

The touching charm and personal magnetism of "Katti" made it easy for her to leap, at one bound almost, to the heights of tragedy, and her Queen Elizabeth in "Don Carlos" was a magnificent creation, while in the famous piece "Stahl und Stein" she displayed the eloquence of genius, and carried all before her.

I purposely mention all this, not by any means in order to glorify Katharina Schratt, but because it seems best under the circumstances to give a short sketch of the true "Katti," since outside of Austria she has been hitherto not only misunderstood, but her true position with regard to the Emperor misrepresented and revoltingly distorted by false interpretations and falser stories.

And now I come to the actual character of her—I confess, somewhat surprising—intimacy with the Imperial Family.

Although, of course, not *hoffähig*, and therefore incapacitated from being officially presented at court, "Kat-

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ti's" position, as a personal friend of the Habsburgs, is now, and has always been, not only absolutely free from any shadow of the mysterious or underhand, but strictly fair and above-board.

Empress Elizabeth, who was the soul of honor and rectitude, and extremely intolerant of anything approaching impropriety, besides being far too clever and wide-awake to be hoodwinked in any way, was sincerely fond of Frau Schratt, and made a point of inviting her to come to see her whenever she was sojourning at her Castle of Lainz, at the Kaiser-Villa in Ischl, or any of the resorts which she loved to visit, outside of her husband's dominions, at the sea-side, the Côte d'Azur, or any other spot from whence strict Court etiquette was banished.

Many a time during the latter years of the Empress's life did "Katti" take a short holiday in the early spring, and, like a bird of good omen, fly to Cape Martin, with the sole object of bringing to her beloved Imperial mistress the first violets which shyly peeped out from their mossy hiding-places in the Viennese Prater.

Her arrival was always a cause of joy for Elizabeth, who was wont to say that the appearance of "Katti," with her sunny smile, and her delicious burden of fragrant flowers, was indeed the first harbinger of spring, and therefore she playfully nicknamed her "L'hiron-delle"—a very felicitous appellation for a creature whose graceful rapidity and elegance of motion reminds one involuntarily of a joyful swallow, flitting hither and thither and carrying hope and loving thoughts wherever she alights.

"*Hirondelle légère dans les cieux éclatants.*" Thus begins the celebrated song written by Felicien David, and thus did the wife of Francis-Joseph invariably greet the woman whom the admirable charity of so-called



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society throughout the length and breadth of two continents, with the solitary exception of Austro-Hungary, loudly proclaimed to be her successful rival in the affections of the only man whom she, Elizabeth, ever loved.

"Oh, thou short of vision, thou canting, senseless, hypocritical thing, society! Will the scales never fall from the eyes of thy adherents?" cries the Duc de Richelieu. "Thou narrow of mind, thou prejudice-girthed, venomous object, hydra with a million heads, unconquerable pest!" continues the Prime-Minister, in a monologue which is full of harsh but strict truths; and Heaven knows that there is not one of us old *Mon-dains* or *Mondaines* who do not at heart indorse the sentiments thus uttered by a faithful legitimist, and a man whose highness of mind and fairness of judgment were proverbial.

I have seen it stated in newspapers professing to be well informed that the Emperor of Austria fell violently in love with the Schratt during a representation of Scribe's "*Ein Glass Wasser*" at the Stadt-Theatre many years ago, and that from that very moment the pretty actress owed her luxury and her splendor to the gallant monarch whose heart she had so swiftly captured.

There is not a word of truth in this. Frau Schratt came face to face with the Emperor for the first time on the occasion of a private audience granted to her at her request, when the debts resulting from the magnificence of the toilettes which she was forced to wear on the stage became so heavy, that she resolved to sever her connection with the Burg-Theatre. The directors, reluctant to lose so popular an artist, having refused to release her from her contract, the plucky, determined little woman went straight to Francis-Joseph, in order to appeal to him as a last and supreme resort.



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"But why do you want to leave the Burg-Theatre?" quoth the monarch, twirling his silky mustaches, as is his wont when annoyed, and looking at the bright, clever face before him with his penetrating blue eyes.

"Oh, Your Majesty, I cannot stay. I am too poor to pay for my dresses," replied "Katti," blushing violently.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the Emperor. "You are being swindled, probably, and the harm is not without a remedy; and as we cannot so easily dispense with an actress of your merit, I will have this matter looked into."

Here I may as well open another parenthesis to explain that while the cost of all the superb classic costumes at the Burg-Theatre and the Opera at Vienna is defrayed by the Sovereign, actresses are required to pay out of their own pockets for the toilettes which they wear in modern plays. "Katti," whose repertoire consisted almost exclusively of light comedy and drama, such as "*L'Etrangère*" and "*Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*," was therefore absolutely swamped by her milliner's bills; but the Emperor was as good as his word. He intrusted to a well-known Viennese financier the mission of settling Frau Schratt's affairs, and this was accomplished with so much success that the actress was enabled, without sacrificing one tithe of her pride or of her independence, to remain a *pensionnaire* of the Burg-Theatre, where she continued to shine as a star of considerable magnitude.

The whole incident was related to the Empress by her Consort, and she was so pleased with the straightforwardness and honesty of Katharina that she sent for her, made her some valuable presents, and befriended her in every possible way, being quite captivated by the simple, light-hearted, winning manners of the "Snow Flower," a strange one, indeed, and a rare, to blossom on the stage.

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Empress Elizabeth was not given to doing things by halves, and when once she liked somebody her esteem and regard were deep and lasting, the word "friend" being with her no empty phrase. It is, therefore, not surprising that she should have made a point of treating Frau Schratt without a trace of condescension, for it was part of her nature to forestall any humiliation, be it ever so slight, which a woman of lesser delicacy of feeling and subtleness of tact might have involuntarily inflicted on a being less privileged than herself, from a worldly stand-point, who chanced to come into contact with her.

At small family dinners and luncheons, when the Emperor and Empress were almost alone, "Katti" was frequently bidden, and her ringing, melodious laugh, her inexhaustible fund of anecdote, and her little touch of vernacular, when she spoke familiarly, kept her Imperial hosts in a continuous vein of good-humor.

There was something almost childlike in her essentially natural and simple fashion of accepting a situation not by any means free from difficulties, nor innocent of shoals, and yet Katharina, strange to declare, never made a solecism, presumed upon the flattering intimacy accorded to her, nor forgot her place even momentarily. All this was accomplished, however, without cringing, flattery, or obsequiousness. She was content with being merely herself, a merry *Wienerkind*, full of guileless fun, ready to make or take a joke, but yet possessed of an undercurrent of sincere, almost pathetic, depth of feeling, which made of her an ideal consoler, and a very precious companion when joy gave place to sorrow and the dark wing of misfortune overshadowed, again and again, the house of her kindly Imperial patrons.

"I am Your Majesty's court-buffoon!" she once exclaimed, when one of her inimitable impersonations of some world-renowned celebrity had made Elizabeth

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laugh for the first time since the death of the Crown-Prince.

"Do not say that," replied the Empress, gently touching the actress's slender hand, and drawing it within her own. "You are our ray of sunshine, my dear; and little do you know how often your delightful mirth has made the Emperor and myself temporarily forget the sadness which now seems to have become part of both of us. Your merriness is not buffoonery; far from it, it is witchery of the most covetable quality, for it chases away dark thoughts and turns the somberest sky rosy."

One summer morning Frau Schratt had been lunching with the Emperor and Empress at Castle Lainz. The weather was oppressively warm, and through the open windows the superb parterres amid which the castle is embedded showed like rich, multi-colored carpets under a lowering, storm-laden sky.

The Empress, who was clad in a diaphanous tea-gown of black gauze and lace, expressed her consideration for "those poor men" who in summer are forced to encase themselves in heavy uniforms or stifling tweeds.

"Pardon me, my Dearest," said the Emperor, solemnly shaking his head, "you do not seem to notice that my uniform is made of some ethereally thin cloth, which comes straight from England, and that really it is no warmer to wear than are your transparent draperies. But," he added, with a sigh of genuine compunction, "it is very delicate and horribly expensive, and I have been sadly extravagant!"

Everybody laughed at the comical air of consternation with which one of the wealthiest of monarchs contemplated his natty attire, this economy, practised only on himself, being a well-known little failing of his.

When, a little later, Francis-Joseph stepped into the

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grounds to take his usual post-prandial constitutional, Frau Schratt was requested by the Empress, who declared that she herself was too overcome by the heat to go out, to accompany him.

Gayly chatting, actress and Emperor wended their way under the shade of the grand old trees, until they were suddenly overtaken, without any other warning than one single, mighty peal of thunder, by a violent downpour of rain.

Hurriedly opening her dainty silk sunshade, Frau Schratt entreated the Emperor to take shelter under this apology for an umbrella.

"What nonsense!" cried Francis-Joseph, turning on his heel, and leading the way towards the distant castle; "I'm not made of salt, my dear child!"

"But, Majesty," implored Katharina, with serious concern, "what about the nice, new, expensive suit of clothes. It will be ruined!"

The Emperor was still laughing heartily over her alarm for this "nice, new, expensive suit" when, drenched to the skin, they re-entered Castle Lainz.

This little anecdote may serve to show what harmless and simple relations existed between the Imperial couple and their "*protégée*."

Nor did this soft-hearted woman ever misuse her influence. She was, on the contrary, always eager to attract the good-natured Emperor's attention towards the poor and the needy, and to this day she never allows an occasion to escape, from which benefit may be derived for those who are in trouble, when she talks with her venerable Imperial friend.

Her rôle has been throughout one of kindly intercession for such unfortunates, many of whom the Emperor, at her request, has aided and relieved from want or mischance. There are, indeed, thousands in the vast extent

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of Austro-Hungary who may thank Katharina Schratt for her timely intervention on their behalf, and who would lose with her the best and sincerest of mediators.

A lonely, wretched, disconsolate life has fallen to the share of the Emperor of Austria since the day when his beautiful Consort was taken from him under such singularly terrible circumstances, and this new and unhealable wound reopened all the others which his brave heart had received during a long career of care and trouble. Is it then a crime that he should have clung to the pure, deep, and loyal friendship of a woman whom he regards as the friend and passionately devoted admirer of his dead wife, and as the companion of happier days? "My comrade," is what he calls "Katti," and a stanch, unselfish comrade she is, as all who know the true circumstances of the case would be ready to testify.

I must not omit to add, if more proof thereof be needed after all which has gone before, that it was not only the Emperor and Empress of Austria who were the firm friends of Katharina Schratt, but that also the Imperial children, as well as the other members of the family, hold her in high regard. Indeed, when three years ago Empress Elizabeth's sister, Countess Trani, made a tour through Italy, she invited "Katti" to accompany her as an honored member of her suite, and it was as such that the actress was received with the royal Princess in private audience by Leo XIII. at the Vatican.

There has never been any question of a morganatic marriage between the monarch and "Katti," still less of any cause for scandal, but merely relations of kindly, devoted, and disinterested friendship, which are viewed with approval by the people of Vienna. They like to feel that their beloved Sovereign has frequently at his side, in her person, not only a wise counsellor, but a woman who considers it her most sacred duty to lighten the

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burden of pain that rests heavily on those square shoulders and that whitened head which have heroically weathered the fury of many storms; storms great enough to have uprooted the very soul of any human being lacking the sterling qualities of courage and of endurance which so endear Francis-Joseph to his subjects.

One lends to the rich, of course, saith the old proverb, and it seems impossible to convince anybody that the knightly monarch, so often compared to the famous lover of the *Mille-e-tre*, the Imperial Don Juan *par excellence*, should in this instance be innocent of everything but genuine friendship; and yet, for all that, it is none the less true.



## CHAPTER IX

EVER since that second honeymoon, described in the preceding chapter, Elizabeth, who had always liked Laxenburg better than Schönbrunn, entertained a peculiar tenderness for this beautiful Imperial abode.

Those who have not seen Laxenburg, especially as it was years ago, before too many modern improvements and the presence of the ex-Princess, ex-Archduchess, ex-Crown-Princess, ex-widow, who spent the first months of that widowhood there, depoetized this ideal castle, have, indeed, a regret to add to those always so generously allowed by life's sad experience.

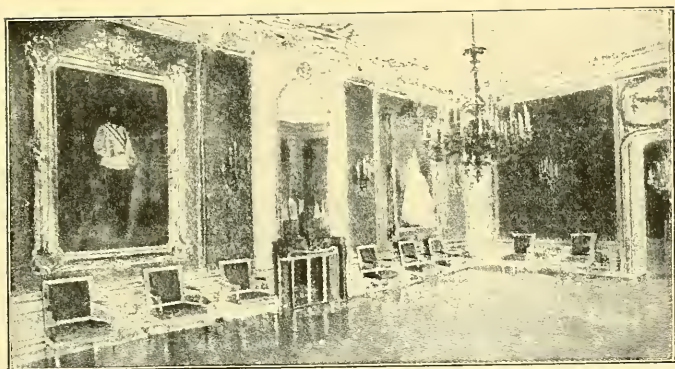
To see Laxenburg to full advantage it was also necessary to visit it in the first fresh burst of early spring, when the great elm and lime trees of the park were still in the tender, delicate loveliness of their pale-green leaflets, and when the ferns, from the tiniest feathery sprays up to the tallest, most ambitious fronds that tower protectingly over banks of violets, primroses, and daffodils, were still uncurling their soft tops in its fragrant glades; or else when late August or early September glow upon the encircling lake, in the stretching aisles of glancing green and gold, where stately red deer trod majestically, and upon the superb front of the magnificent building, with its terraces and *tourelles*, its immense gardens and lawns of velvet turf, and its century-old timber, under the shadow of which "little Franzi" once played so light-heartedly and carelessly with his beloved "Grot."

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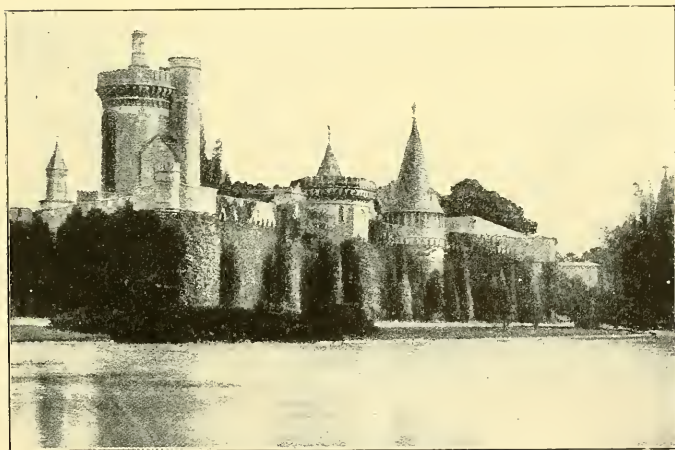
Kestrels and gerfalcons wheeled constantly in the sunny sky of the fair, soft, brilliant autumn days, keeping their jewel-like eyes harshly bent upon the tangle of brown-tufted weeds, lance-leaved water gladioli, and lustrous, dark-green arrowheads, where the teal and mallard ducks had their nests, and gigantic blue herons stood everlastingly on one or the other of their slender yellow legs, watching mockingly and quizzically their enemies, the white and black imperial swans floating contemptuously close, and disturbing with their soft-plumaged breasts the clear reflection of the massive battlemented tower, the fretted pinnacles, and the marvellously carved balconies of this paradisiacal fairy *château*, distant enough from town or village to make it the most delightful of all residences.

Fully worthy of the wellnigh unequalled beauty of this exterior was the dim splendor of purple and gold, the soft-hued draperies, the gleam of ancient, inlaid armor, the flash of priceless trophies which greeted one everywhere within.

It was a joy to the eye to walk from the lofty, cedar-ceiled salons to the great galleries, hung with Van Dykes, Mignards, Holbeins, Spagnalettos and many other countless *chefs d'œuvre* by Dutch, French, and Spanish masters; from the banqueting-hall, panelled with black oak, where the arms of the Habsburgs and of the royal and imperial houses with which they had allied themselves were emblazoned, and on three sides of which were ranged elaborately carved knights' stalls with gorgeous banners, heavily brodered, drooping above them, to the private chapel, gleaming like a gem set in richly tinted enamels, ivory, and dusky gold, when the sun-rays fell upon its treasures through the ruby and emerald, the sapphire and amethyst and rich, dazzling topaz of its inimitable *verrières*.



THE EMPEROR'S PRIVATE HALL OF AUDIENCE IN THE  
HOFBURG



SCHLOSS LAXENBURG



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That was the old Laxenburg, which the latest occupants, I am told, have declared to be too severe, too august, too dark, too stern, too antique, and, if I judge rightly from what I know of one of them especially, have probably "embellished" with plush portières and gay Parisian furniture.

I am endowed with absurd and barbaric tastes, and therefore Laxenburg in its sombre, noble charm, with its hundred figures of knights in full armor, standing firmly in the *Rittersaal*, its *oubliettes*, where the white bones of long-dead prisoners still peeped from the darkness, its amazing stone and wood carvings, its painted cabinets, its library filled with hundreds of volumes, including many *editio-princeps* dating from the Renaissance, many ivory and silver bound missals and books of hours, and many great rolls of yellow parchment, with huge seals bearing heraldic arms and crowns, depending from them by broad, faded ribbons, its trophies of antique matchlocks, and scintillating, jewel-hilted, damascene-scabbarded swords, adorning the halls and corridors, was to me the realization, indeed, of what a truly royal residence should be.

I might add, if this did not really sound over-pretentious and quite too lacking in humility, that these views of mine concerning Laxenburg were shared by no meaner a personage than Empress Elizabeth herself, who never tired of wandering in the almost unique and marvellous Gothic chapel, where is preserved the monstrance holding the Holy Sacrament displayed to Maximilian I., on the cliff of the Martinswand, immediately before his marvellous rescue; of admiring the private sitting-room reserved for the Habsburg Empresses, and which is quaintly and most originally tapestried with the mantles of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, worn at the installation of this supreme Order;

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or of gazing in the armory at the astonishingly beautiful armor of His Majesty, Charles V., and at the delicately wrought bas-reliefs, representing the siege of Troy, which adorn his helmet.

This reminds me of one special ride with the Empress from Schönbrunn to Laxenburg, during which she told me exactly what she thought about this architectural gem; and as I have been very sparing thus far—in my own opinion, at least—about personal reminiscences, I shall indulge myself in a short one now.

After a brisk gallop along the uninterrupted avenue of trees connecting the two chief Imperial summer palaces in the neighborhood of Vienna, we slackened our speed and fell to chatting, as was our wont.

Elizabeth was riding a chestnut thoroughbred, possessed of a morose temper and a very wild eye, and I a fidgety bay, addicted to unseemly gambols, and disconcerting *tête-a-queus*; but this mattered but little, for we progressed very comfortably, and, as my gracious companion humorously put it, "with all the inimitable dignity of twin Cyniscas returning from the Olympian games."

The weather was absolutely perfect for a ride, and the checkered shadow of the great, umbrageous boughs overhead was deliciously cool and pleasant.

"I have," the Empress said, suddenly, "a very particular tenderness for our as yet unspoiled Austrian Chenonceaux. There are things quite as interesting as at the Burg to be seen there, some even more so, and, moreover, its being built on the lake in this old-fashioned way endears it extremely to me."

I knew of memories which endeared Laxenburg still more to her, but said nothing about those, of course, and silently acquiesced.

"Every time I am there," she continued, flicking the



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ears of her horse absent-mindedly with the end of her stick, which made the latter treat us to a bound prodigious enough to have unseated any one else, but which did not even cause this amazing horsewoman to interrupt her sentence, "I invariably fall to envying the ladies for whom those delicious full suits of armor we were looking at the other day were made."

"To judge from them," I replied, dryly, "Jeanne d'Arc was not the only 'fair ladye' who appreciated the pleasures of excitement and danger, and merrily sallied forth to encounter such distractions as flying arrows and exploding culverins."

"Such feelings are distinctly in favor of mediæval women," she began; but the sudden breaking of a small branch caused her estimable hunter to stand upright, viciously pawing the air, and it was only when her, "Gently, old boy; quiet, quiet!" had induced the irascible animal to come down on his forelegs again that she resumed—"They say that I have been guilty of many mad pranks. What say you to our being measured for armor? That would startle the old fogies, would it not, and make them *chicane* us with renewed vigor?"

I laughed. The idea was amusing to me. "The feudal times must have been glorious!" I exclaimed, however, anxious to turn the conversation back into safer channels, for any thought of "the old fogies" was sure to destroy her good-humor; "but it seems to me they are never well or fairly described, either by romancists, who mostly vilify them, or by historians, who do them scant justice."

"You are quite right; it has often struck me, too. There is a strange spite against the aristocracy of the Middle Ages, and that of the present also, for that matter, in this enlightened period. It is sheer prejudice, nothing else, for the hypocrisies, Jesuitisms, giant

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frauds, robberies, swindles, and other agreeable qualities of the middle classes and *parvenus* of to-day would give points to the boldest and most high-handed doings of the *Rauber-Barons*."

This was so much my own opinion that I cried, delightedly, "Yes, yes! the most amazing fancy of modernists is that low breeding purifies and blue blood stains; that the self-made man is invariably a hero, while to descend from a long line of valiant soldiers is, *ipse-facto*, to be devoid of common honesty, ordinary morals, or even so much as a conscience. It seems odd, does it not, that a man or woman who have inherited refinement and a high conception of honor from their ancestors should be the worse for it, and consequently selected as the stalking-horses of vice and villany. Doubtless, there are very estimable and irreproachable *parvenus*, but that should be no reason to annihilate us *en bloc*!"

The Empress laughed—the gay, infectious laugh so peculiarly her own when she had for a few hours cast off the prevailing melancholy of her nature.

"Estimable *parvenus*! I should think so. For instance, Peel, Baptiste Colbert, Napoleon I., Ney, and a hundred other brilliant encouragements to youths whose talents are superior to their station in life; but those all rose by worthy means. I think, talking of men who rise by worthy means, by energy and by mental *force du poignet*, that I should like to go and spend a few weeks in America. That is the only republican country I ever admired. A race which produced Audubon surely cannot produce regicides and anarchists!"

"Perhaps you are right, although this is a novel view of racial characteristics," I replied, rather dubiously. "Of course, in America things may be different in that respect. One cannot pardon any one belonging to the old Nobility turning republican, although feudalism has

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now so nearly vanished, excepting here in Austria and in mine own Brittany; yet it would not be right to sneer down a huge country like America for choosing its form of government, since it never had a king of its own."

In spite of our talk we had ridden reasonably fast, and this exchange of ideas, which was brought back vividly to my mind under very different circumstances some ten years later, was interrupted by our entrance into the park of Laxenburg, which, in its late summer beauty of clustering blossoms, scattered by a soft breeze all over the turf, of climbing China-roses blotching the cool, green shadows with vivid color, and of huge, magnolia-like, metallic-leaved trees, where deep cups of waxy pink nestled, diffusing an intoxicating fragrance, admitted of no more dallying with dry political questions.

The sun was just setting, and there was a rosy glow upon the lake, bathing it with a tender grandeur deepening each moment, and silhouetting the distant Donjon Keep of the Franzensburg, with its waving silken banner ripplingly profiled in bronze tints against the dazzling sky. As we rode past the rose-garlanded *Meyerei*, its diamond-paned windows sparkled with reflected fires, while the castle itself in this heavenly light looked like a dream edifice, or the palace of Arthur's beloved Avalon.

Elizabeth leaned forward in her saddle, watching that feast of exquisite hues on land, sky, and water.

"What a delicious place!" she exclaimed. "Oh, do look at that delicate mixture of pearl and amethyst on the lake, and the rich, warm pink of those last sun-rays glorifying the sombre ivy and the cold, gray stone carvings of the balconies! It is perfect! absolutely perfect! and I do not think it can easily be equalled. Let us ride to the *Turnierplatz*, and try to imagine that steel-clad *Chevaliers* are awaiting us there to fight in the grand old way for "the honor of their ladye," and that we are

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living in those fortunate times when far finer creatures than ourselves were led by four little words only: '*L'Honneur parle; il suffit!*' "

The *Turnierplatz*, or Lists, on that superb evening looked to both of us just as if Rudolph of Habsburg himself, surrounded by a procession of knights in full armor, preceded by heralds, and followed at a long distance by the priests, the surgeons, and the terrible, sable-draped *Todtenwagen*, meant to bear away those killed in the encounter, was advancing to grace a tournament by his noble presence.

It was a moment when, in our imaginations at least, the brave days of chivalry were revived, for the place truly had the perfume of ancient times, and was in as great a contrast with modernism as the grace and courtliness of manner of our ancestors is to the boorish, hail-fellow-well-met tone of to-day.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Empress, as at last we turned our horses towards home, "Laxenburg is the only place which makes me feel better than I really am; it is so stately, so quiet, and so untroubled, so penetrated with old-world charm. A noble place, indeed! One would not be surprised to see Duguesclin emerge from that leafy way yonder, or to encounter Roland striding through the dim and dewy fern-brakes to the edge of the lake where those lilies and forget-me-nots are growing. When I am a white-haired old woman I will come here to live in solitude, in order to close my dreamy existence by a last enduring dream of the beautiful past!"

Poor Elizabeth! little did she think that her pure, noble dreams would be cut short, ignobly, brutally, by the foul hand of an anarchist, and that with her husband's most cherished ones would be buried also.

Among the latter stood pre-eminent, for years and years, the reconstruction of old Schloss Habsburg; for

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the cradle of his race, where his illustrious ancestor, Rudolph, first Emperor of his line, lived and loved and suffered six centuries ago, is to-day in alien hands, lying, as it does, in Switzerland, close to the German frontier, and many miles from Austrian territory.

It was, indeed, one of Emperor Francis-Joseph's most heart-felt hopes to purchase and restore it; but this was fated never to come to pass; and to this day its splendid, half-ruined halls, its numerous rooms, and its long, winding corridors are still used by the worthy Swiss to stable cows and pigs, while the apartment once occupied by the great Rudolph himself, and which alone, out of so many, is in an almost complete state of preservation, has been transformed into a *Bier Schenke*, where fat-cheeked, round-eyed Helvetic maidens dispense mugs of foaming ale and thick tumblers full of potato-brandy to rare tourists and frequent native consumers.

Some years ago, having spent a portion of the summer in Tyrol, I felt tempted to travel on to Switzerland for the purpose of visiting Castle Habsburg. I, therefore, took train to Schintznach, in the lovely valley of the Aar, where I arrived on a superb September morning, rutilant with golden sunshine and fragrant with the intoxicating odor of millions of apples ripening in the great orchards, which are a distinct feature of the *Canton d'Argovie*; and, accompanied only by my old courier, I set off at a brisk pace up the melancholy and densely wooded hills which surround, on all sides, the crumbling towers of the grand old fortress I had come to see.

Densely wooded, indeed, was the whole region, and the path we followed was cool with checkered shade, and crossed, occasionally, wild little forest streams or shallow brooklets, gurgling, tinkling, and murmuring among velvet-clad stones, green as moss alone can be when it is very damp.



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I have a great weakness for narrow bridle-paths with rustling boughs meeting overhead, and borders of tall, moist-looking, lanceolated ferns, which shelter tiny, timid, pale-hued blossoms, hiding their delicate loveliness under emerald-tinted veils, as were it a sin to be beautiful!

A clear, amber light fell through the aisles of the trees, and the track was so hedged in, and in places so overrun by wild-rose, honeysuckle, and dainty mauve harebells, that I had the—to me always delightful—sensation of its being quite easy to lose one's self in this delicious tangle.

I walked onward, watching whole hosts of squirrels leaping from branch to branch, or knocking down fuzzy chestnut-burrs, which fell with a rattle, and were turned to green-gold by stray beams of the now rapidly ascending sun.

Far down in the valley bells were ringing their mid-day chimes, and the melodious sound rose soft and mellowed on the clear, pellucid air.

At last we suddenly debouched upon a plateau of bluish granite, split here and there by the tenacious roots of wych-elms, and in the middle of which the crumbling, ivy-mantled towers of a once mighty castle cast black shadows upon a wide moat, where the round leaves of lilies and the sharp spikes of irises alone broke the monotony of slimy, stagnant, green-coated water.

From the frowning battlements orange and brown-petalled gilly-flowers, pink-tufted *Joubarbes*, and flaming *Ravenelles* peeped forth, where once the pikes of men-at-arms had glittered, and out of the loop-holes, blackened by powder-stains centuries old, swallows were flying in joyful zigzags towards the pale blue of the sky.

In spite of neglect, and of the heavy hand of time and of abandonment, the grim, forbidding pile of masonry had still, on that side at least, a stately, solemn aspect. In the silence, the stillness of that autumn day one felt



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humiliatingly small and insignificant, almost crushed, before this great relic of dead-and-gone ages, which not even the power of an Emperor could reclaim, the Cantonal Government which owns it having repulsed Francis-Joseph's generous offers of purchase with curt refusals, heeding but little the sorry fact of this broken eagle's nest—this once proud dwelling of sovereigns—remaining forever in the rude grasp of cow-herds.

Slowly I wended my way through the luxuriant nettles and wild absinthe-plants growing knee-high all around, and, crossing the battered remains of the draw-bridge, I shuddered in the warmth of the sunlit *Cour d'Honneur* as my eyes fell on the destruction of this noble place, the heaped-up stones fallen from the thick, gray walls, and upon which ground-vines ran riot, the remnants of gorgeously stained glass still jaggedly adhering to the lancet window casements, and the tall watch-tower looking as if, wounded by many catapults and blasted and scorched by petronels, it would even now totter and fall were its strong corset of dark ivy torn from about its gaunt shape.

At the sound of our footsteps a peevish-looking old man came out of a low postern-door and inquired our pleasure. He was the custodian of the place, as well as the vendor of the beer and brandy, bread and cheese partaken of by his customers in the oak-panelled room where once Rudolph von Habsburg had rested. Also, he was the proud owner of the cows, pigs, and cackling poultry desecrating the audience-place, the banqueting-hall, and the noble, loftily arched *Rittersaal*, where knights had sat in council or at meat, under dim banners drooping from the blazoned ceiling above their plumed and helmeted heads.

Upon our guide's uninviting countenance shone an expression of proprietary pride as he led me from room to

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room, all and sundry pervaded by a heavy, nauseating stench of manure; and his yokel's surly laugh echoed under the groined roof of what had once been the chapel, when he pointed out massacred statues of saints, blackened by the rains and snows of countless winters, which the searching winds each year blow more freely through widening fissures.

From the crumbling battlements, upon which mine host prudently refused to follow me, the view is magnificent.

Far and near I saw verdure-clad hills undulating between green valleys, where the broad ribbons of streams sparkled in clear tints of blue and silver. A hazy radiance, created by sun-heat and distance, enwrapped the oak and birch woods extending to the horizon, with now and again the deep purple of pines marking islands of darkness on this murmuring, rustling sea of foliage.

An infinite sense of peace emanated from those vast, unworn solitudes made up of century-old timber, of deep grasses, of the endless shade of towering firs, of torrents and tarns, and of realms upon realms of pure ether, in which vultures wheeled and blue herons sailed, uttering their resounding rallying cry.

For a long time I leaned on the stone parapet of the watch-tower gazing upon the varying colors of land and cloud, upon the pure, transparent gray and rose of the western sky, towards which the sun was gently gliding and soon would sink, upon the green twilight of the deep gorges immediately beneath the rugged spur whereon the castle rose, and I let my thoughts wander to the dim days of the year 1020, when the Chevalier Radbot had built it, in concert with his brother, Arch Abbot Werner, and when the steel-clad followers of marauding Barons had swept up these rocky slopes, to be gallantly received upon the lance-points of its defenders.

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Nothing was stirring around me save a flight of sombre-pinioned birds—no doubt some pertinacious descendants of the original Habsburg ravens—circling high up in the air, above the dilapidated turrets at my left; and the mossy stones, the lifeless courts, and empty keep gathered a great dignity and an overpowering austerity from this very lack of sound and motion.

Would this old place never be restored to its long-departed glory, this jewel of the past remain always in alien, desecrating hands? What mortification that the scene of so many grand and noble deeds should now echo nothing save the lowing of cattle, the grunting of pigs, or the hoarse curses or ribald jokes of drunken peasants!

I tried to reconstruct, for my own gratification, the long-forgotten days when this ruin had overflowed with active, joyful life; when the great apartments beneath my feet had been thrown open; when servants, retainers, gayly clad pages, and brown-robed monks had passed in and out of them; when merry hunting-parties had set off at the call of the huntsmen's silver horns, in pursuit of bear and wolf within the great forest; when the setting sun had touched the bright folds of the Habsburg banner floating above the watch-tower, originally built, if legend speaks truly, by Count Gontran le Riche, the *Habichsgraf*, and hosts of nobles had feasted before battle in the banqueting-hall.

A dull, half-conscious pain crept into my heart, and a bitter sense of depression made me shiver again as I awoke from this dazzling dream to all that was left of the teeming, crowded life which had disappeared forever—awoke to the terrible pathos of so much that was lost with it—and I mentally registered a vow to faithfully acquaint those to whom such knowledge was due of all I had seen that day.

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"Will it be of any use?" I said, half aloud, and then I descended the narrow, granite steps, worn thin by feet long resting underground, and made my way to the vine-grown arbor where I had left my own tired and aged retainer.

Soon we were once more walking briskly through the forest. The sun was now quite low on the horizon, and its slanting rays showed blood-red between the boles of the trees. Behind us the ruins, that had been raised with hewn stone so many centuries before, towered fantastically against the evening sky, solemn and sombre; beside the narrow wood-path a jagged tooth of lichen-grown stone, pierced here and there, through the undergrowth, like some long-forsaken Breton Dolmen; and soon a romantic, silvery grayness replaced the golden splendor of the vanished sunbeams.

As we went down the hill, amid the gathering darkness and the sobbing of the little brooks, the thought of what I had seen that day hung over me, in a vague oppression, like the shadow of something great which had passed away forever!

When I returned to Vienna, Crown-Prince Rudolph, to whom I recounted my visit to Castle Habsburg, swore that he would overrule the obstinacy of the Swiss Government; and, later on, he also undertook a trip to the *Canton d'Argovie*, under the strictest incognito, but his efforts, like those of his father, were, alas! barren; and, bitterly disappointed and saddened, he, too, went his way wondering.

## CHAPTER X

To obtain a general view of a battle, or of a mist-wreathed mountain-summit, one does not follow the combatants into the turmoil or ascend the mountain-side, but, standing at a distance, one strives to pierce the mantle of cloud, whether it be due to the sulphurous reek of conflict or to vapors sun-drawn from the eternal snows, which, lifting here and drawing aside there, allows, in successive glimpses, the desired vision.

The recorder of the life of a great sovereign must do likewise, be it said, in extenuation of the leaps and bounds by which I am forced to proceed, and also as an excuse for suddenly transplanting my patient reader to Paris in the early spring of 1864, when, beside the Seine, flashing onward, all silvered in the moonlight, under the illuminated bridges of the great city, from the leafy glades of the marvellous forest of Fontainebleau, towards the thickly wooded heights of St. Germain, the great chestnuts of the Tuileries gardens were just thrusting out their first green leaves through the resinous armor of their swollen buds.

The Paris of those days, the palmiest of Napoleon III.'s Empire, was, as every one knows, fatiguingly light-hearted, merry, noisy, dazzling, brilliant, and re-echoing with the thrill of feverish laughter. Over this sea of jest and mirth *Mabille* scintillated, like a very Pharos, beckoning light-hearted navigators to a harbor of eternal *fête* and never-ceasing gayety, and vied with *La Chaumière* in the production of extraordinary revels.



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The palace of the Tuileries was thronged on this particular spring night, for a great ball was being given in honor of the new Emperor and Empress of Mexico, brother and sister-in-law of Francis-Joseph of Austria, and a dense *cohue* of courtiers and other "general utilities" of that meretriciously glittering pseudo-court filled the enfilade of over-gilded salons, blazing with myriads of lights and heavy with the odor of hot-house flowers.

In the *Quadrille d'Honneur*, with a wealth of rubies and diamonds crowning her red *bandeaux* and drooping curls, and a white, cloudlike dress billowing about her perfect figure, Eugénie moved gracefully, opposite a woman as dissimilar to herself as light is to dawn.

Tall, slender, her magnificent neck and arms emerging from showers and cascades of black laces, the jessamine whiteness of her skin and the blackness of her tresses admirably set off by the ropes of pearls she wore in profusion, and the pointed diadem of jewelled flowers surmounting her smooth brow, was Charlotte, Princess of Belgium, Archduchess of Austria, and since quite recently Empress of Mexico.

She was dancing with Napoleon, but looked straight before her, her thin lips slightly parted in a half-smile of triumph and exultation, because she, too, like her sweet sister-in-law, Elizabeth, of whom she had always been so bitterly jealous, was now an Empress, and she occasionally allowed her sparkling black eyes to rest upon her tall, blond husband, who was Eugénie's partner, yet there was no saving shadow of love, gratitude, or tremulous, wifely pride in her regard to denote that he had not made his sacrifice in vain, only a harsh glitter of realized ambition and sated content.

Ambition, indeed, was the leading passion of this memorable *fête*; for had not that powerful incentive alone brought together the reckless crowd of degenerate



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nobles who had soiled their escutcheons by condescending to *rallié* themselves round Louis Napoleon; of women who had bartered their blue blood for a rich marriage with some gilded *Roturier* of the second Empire; of rather more than less compromised and shady male and female Bonapartes, whom one had now to address humbly as "Imperial Highnesses," and of whole shoals of daring adventurers, of suave ruffians, their breasts covered with exotic ribbons and orders, their lips grimacing with obsequious smiles, while they delicately murmured evil, joyously destroyed myriads of reputations far fairer than their own, or spoke aloud sickening flatteries to those gullible enough to believe them?

A fit *entourage* this for Eugénie de Montijo, who just then was at the height of her beauty and of her triumph, and who imperiously, if not Imperially, had set her little Spanish foot on the neck of France, and ruled it as she listed; a fit *entourage* also for her pale-faced, waxed-mustached Consort, who now, censed with the purple incense of worship and of power, had, nevertheless, raised himself by very questionable means to this height from the quagmire of poverty and humiliation, in which he had so long vegetated.

His friends—accomplices, one is tempted to say—had assisted him to the topmost rung of that ladder of craft with which he had for years attempted to escalate the Throne, and his immense tact—for tact he possessed to a supreme degree—enabled him to maintain his ill-balanced position. None could now deride, but all bowed before this doubtful Bonaparte, who had become the cloud-compeller of European politics. The wretched *mésalliance*—I mean from the stand-point of policy—he had made, not entirely for love, but *faute de mieux* (all marriageable Princesses and ladies of high degree and unblemished record, having, curtly and with touching

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unanimity, declined the questionable honor of sharing his Crown) had for a short while obscured his swiftly rising star; but in a very brief space of time thousands had capitulated before the surpassing charm and skill of the modern Aphrodite he had married, so that few were left to debate maliciously, as thousands had done, the sorry question of her origin, or to hint that her red-gold tresses and exquisite face and form had risen, not from pearly sea-foam, but from no one knew where, and that her pretensions to royal blood were, indeed, so one-sided that they should not really have been made a subject of such pride on her part.

An acknowledged leader of Parisian fashions, Parisian *ton*, Parisian pleasure, and Parisian *coquetterie*, *Sa Majestè l'Impératrice* had but one thorn in her bed of roses, one pebble in her satin shoe, one regret in her narrow soul—namely, her hitherto lamentable incapacity to bring to terms the true, *bona-fide*, loyal, incorruptible French Nobility, who, reared under the formal etiquette of a Hereditary Monarchy, or simply fed upon the remembrance of days when the sceptre was not a toy to be raffled for or seized and detained by the first-comer, had not permitted themselves to be vanquished by her fascinations or even touched by her loudly declared cult for Marie Antoinette.

This severity, this intolerance, this inconceivable obstinacy and imbecile loyalty to a past *régime* and to antiquated ideas and principles, shocked and scandalized the fair and petulant interloper, who was the victim of such absurd and rococo traditions; and, of a truth, it would tax all the sweetness and gentleness for which she was so unjustly famed to forgive such exiguity of mind when finally these uncomfortable people surrendered at discretion—as she did not doubt that they would do some day!

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If, at least, she had been able to treat *de puissance-à-puissance* with her husband's brother and sister sovereigns, it would have consoled her a little for this deplorable checkmate administered by the Faubourg St.-Germain, and even to a still greater degree by the provincial aristocracy; but, alas! she was too shrewd not to realize that, although forced by political considerations to recognize her presence on the Throne of France, yet that genuine queens and empresses, even her own Spanish Queen, Isabella, whose maid-of-honor she had been, regarded her with something akin to scorn, and looked upon her merely as the most attractive figure of a huge masquerade—nothing more. A truly galling thought this for a very pretty woman, priding herself upon the extraordinarily patrician slenderness of her wrists and ankles!

What was her joy, therefore, when, after so many vain efforts and coquettings with foreign Courts and the ancient Houses of the French aristocracy, she at length perceived an opportunity of making the most haughty and most superb of the Imperial dynasties of Europe recant its heterodoxy towards herself! She had grasped eagerly at the chance of becoming the political sponsor—nay, more, very much more than that—the gracious hostess and devoted friend of one of its Archduchesses, whom French bayonets were, at her instigation, to elevate to the throne as Empress of Mexico.

Snobbery is a dangerous defect, *un joueur contre qui ne rien perdre est déjà beaucoup gagner*, and poor Eugénie, for all the pains she had lavished upon its satisfaction, had been hitherto rewarded with the blackest ingratitude—some said with the direst contempt; but, of course, nobody in his or her senses uses ugly dictionary words nowadays, except when they are determined to go in for that most impolite of all virtues, truth.

Charlotte was, to a certain extent, also a *parvenue*—

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at any rate as an Empress. True, she was the legitimate daughter of a King, and the Consort of an Austrian Archduke, but her Mexican Crown was even more glaringly new than that of Eugénie. She realized perfectly that it perched but insecurely upon her silky tresses, and, in her effort to preserve its equilibrium, was especially prepared to resent any affront to her newly acquired dignity. She judged, moreover, her hostess to be far too presumptuous, and baffled all her blandishments and friendly advances, arousing a hatred in the Spanish woman by her scarcely veiled disdain and nonchalant superciliousness, which, later on, was to cost her and her ill-fated husband dear.

It must be confessed that Eugénie, who was a superior "*comédienne*," concealed her injured pride and cruel mortification with admirable artifice. She did not for a moment allow her radiant smile to grow constrained, nor permit a flash of anger to redden her velvety cheek, in which effort she undoubtedly showed better breeding than did Charlotte, who, with the *insouciance* and amusement of a spoiled child demolishing a costly toy, pierced the other's assumed purple in the most delicate and agonizing fashion, with a gleam of clearly noticeable malice pailleting her big, black eyes. She could not have said more clearly, if she had used words, "I am not in the mood to thus descend to your level, my fair lady"; and Eugénie, in her priceless laces and jewels, her diaphanous, snowy draperies, her intoxicating beauty, swallowed the ashes of humiliation to the last cinder, without giving any sign of her disappointment and rage, but promising herself *in-petto* to be a merciless creditor towards her haughty antagonist when the reckoning day should come.

The reckoning day came round sooner than even she had hoped, when, in far-off Mexico, under the calm, in-

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tensely blue tropic sky; under the full, relentless tropic sun streaming down on the parched earth, the cactus, and tangled chaparral; in the sultry silence of early morning, broken only by the rustle of the wind in the dried grasses, Emperor Maximilian and his two companions in torture, General Miramon and General Mejia, stood erect and unfaltering before the *peloton d'exécution*, outside the sinister little cemetery crowning the hill at Queretaro.

The debt was paid! Ah, yes! with usurious interest, a full and overflowing measure, when the once proud, magnificent, disdainful Charlotte, wearied from long travel, breathless in her agony, giddy with swiftly dawning insanity, dazed and torn by fear, shame, and despair, cast herself at the feet of Napoleon, and implored him, by every justice in earth and heaven, to succor before it was too late! too late! too late! the man he had sworn to protect; while cool and serene the now fully avenged Eugénie, almost doubting her senses, listened, not without feminine triumph, to the piteous wails of the crazed, wild, black-robed woman, crouching there upon the ground like a stricken animal, crying aloud, with the hoarse fierceness of unbearable misery:

"You will not dare to let him die! He is an Austrian, not a Frenchman or a Mexican. He accepted the Throne of Mexico, not for his own gratification, but at my instance. Do your worst to me, but, by all justice, all pity, save him! Do not let him die a dog's death out there in that cruel, brutal land of fire, assassination, and treachery!"

In her madness she offered again and again to deliver up her own life for his, repeating her monotonous refrain, not to wait until it was too late! too late! too late! She had now no knowledge left save this—no heed for whatsoever her bruised and shattered brain suggested they might do to her—she, who had come so far to ob-



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tain help for her doomed husband, and piteously she repeated again and again, "Save him, before he dies in that hell! Have you not mercy enough even to lift a finger to rescue him from the doom to which you have delivered—sold him? Let me die in his stead! I will never bid you spare me one pang, only save the life you and I have sent out to destruction!"

At length her vehemence brought a fear upon those two Imperial adventurers, for if she judged that they, in their wanton cruelty, really were the murderers of her husband, she also clearly believed herself to be far more his destroyer, his evil spirit, the selfish, heartless counselor whose limitless ambition had consigned him to mental and corporal torment; and in the crimson mists of her confused senses she suffered a torture which no human eye could witness undismayed. Their almost superstitious terror kept them from raising her, until her worn-out strength, her over-strained nerves succumbed, and she fell back, dead to all sentient life, to all remembrance, to all thought, her pride of nature, her beauty, her Imperial ambitions, her love for domination, her hopes, her sufferings momentarily killed within her by this last and supreme blow—their refusal to help her rescue him.

Shortly afterwards, at a private audience at the Vatican, whither she had gone, only to discover that here, also, there was no help for her husband, the last thread snapped. In the presence of the Holy Father her reason fled, and she was forever spared the tidings of the catastrophe which she had so dreaded.

Years have come and years have gone, cold winters and burning summers, verdant springs and golden autumns have succeeded each other, but Charlotte, ex-Empress of Mexico, is still insensible to all physical and mental suffering, wrapped in a heavy, sullen darkness of



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soul, worse a thousand times than death, and of which she gave the first signs at the Tuileries.

Now and again the sound of a light summer breeze, ruffling the fanlike leaves of the palms brought out to embellish the gardens of the royal domain, half palace and half prison, wherein she vegetates, has wrenched from her a cry, awaking all the echoes of the vast, shadowy park enshrouding her sinister abode—a piteous wail which thrills and terrifies her keepers. She springs then to her feet, convulsed to passionate energy for a few fleeting minutes, and rushes forward, with her old cry, “Save him before it is too late! too late!” Then she laughs aloud, the laugh of a breaking heart, and quivers from head to foot, until, under their drooping lids, her eyes lose their feverish light, and she relapses into her icy calm—her merciful oblivion.

Does Eugénie, now discrowned also—lonely, widowed, childless—feel any remorse? Does she, who has suffered as her so uselessly proclaimed heroine, Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, suffered, when the Crown was torn from her golden head, and she was submitted to the gibes and insults of the people, admit to herself how great was her responsibility in the events which in the end consigned Maximilian and Charlotte, one to an unjust and barbarous death, the other to despair and madness?

Some eight or ten years ago I chanced to visit the rooms of a certain historical society in a large city in the vicinity of New York. Approaching through the dusty roar of the main business street, with its trolley cars and lumbering throng of vehicles, I obtained admission by a dark hallway and staircase to a large, unkempt apartment, dim in the light of a cloudy day, that smelled of musty books. The place was crowded with books; they filled ranks of shelves, reaching nearly to the ceiling and occupying half the width of the floor space; they lay upon

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tables, interspersed with a litter of papers; they reposed in dingy cabinets along the walls, which were hung with faded and grimy portraits; and through doors, opening this way and that, I could see into small, carpetless rooms, apparently overflowing with more books, pictures, and odds and ends of historical lumber. There were a couple of attendants, who appeared to be native to this dreary chamber, and one of them, while waiting upon me, directed my attention to a valuable souvenir. Hanging to a nail in the end of one of the row of bookshelves was a small, faded photograph, showing Maximilian, Archduke and Emperor, in his coffin, which had apparently been set upright on end for the convenience of the photographer. The body was absolutely unclothed, except for a cloth about the loins, the eyes closed as in sleep, and the bullet-marks of the executioners showed plainly as dark, round spots upon the rigid form. An old and faded letter from the donor, who was apparently an enthusiastic partisan of Juarez, hung below!

My eyes filled with tears as I turned away—tears at the thought of the terrible sorrow that had fallen, so long before, upon the much-enduring man who still stands at the helm of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

So this was the end! His favorite brother, a man of the bluest blood in Europe, standing close in the succession to an ancient throne, young, high-souled, and chivalrous, sent out by a woman's whim to be murdered by half-bred savages, and dishonored in his death that the curiosity of the many might be cheaply satisfied.

This loss was, indeed, to Francis-Joseph a sorrow and a bitterness that never wholly passed away. His other brothers were dear to him; but Archduke Ferdinand (Maximilian) had been dearer far. They had grown up together in a much greater intimacy than ever existed between him and the two younger Archdukes, Karl-

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Ludwig and Ludwig-Victor. Indeed, the elder brother had felt always a sort of protecting tenderness for the simplicity of nature and the comparatively bodily delicacy of Ferdinand. He had been strongly opposed to his accepting the Crown of Mexico, and, overruled by Charlotte's fiery will, had yielded only when Napoleon III. engaged himself, by a treaty signed at the castle of Miramar, in the spring of 1864, to leave an army of twenty-five thousand men in Mexico until the new Emperor became able to gather together an equivalent force of loyal Mexicans and of foreign mercenaries.

How this treaty was adhered to and what unwarrantable and shallow excuses Napoleon made for breaking it is too well known to need repetition here.

Francis-Joseph never forgave this flagrant breach of faith, and in 1870, when to have made common cause with France would have been to crush Prussia, and set Austria in her ancient place as leader of the German states, he held his hand rather than become the ally of the man who had abandoned his brother, with the result that the second Empire fell like a pricked bubble.

Archduchess Sophia mourned her second son with a grief that time could do little to assuage, but those who knew her well saw that greater even than her sorrow for Ferdinand was the anxiety she felt for her first-born, whose poignant, conscience-stricken distress at having allowed his brother to enter into so perilous a contract put even his magnificent health in peril. She remained continually by his side, tending him with her usual devotion, but accusing him in her innermost heart of morbidity, although she knew well that no man as active in duty and unsparing of himself as Francis-Joseph can be morbid; and that, moreover, *bon sang ne pent mentir*, even when one's conception of duty is too exalted, perchance, and one's capacity for family affections of almost too high

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an order; so she was not greatly surprised, after all, when the Emperor's steel nerves and perfect natural constitution reasserted themselves, and when he resumed his habitual, unceasing labor, resolutely, generously, and justly, and with the same success as before this blow had fallen upon him.

After the first shock he gave no sign of the sense of deep bereavement and regret that weighed like a pall upon him, and haunted him so greatly that not even his reconciliation with his wife, which, as I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> recounted, had taken place just before their coronation as King and Queen of Hungary, during the very days of 1867, when Maximilian was going through his long agony on the other side of the world, could console him.

He took long rides and long walks alone during the remainder of that fateful summer, but the rest of the time he spent in unremitting application to his heavy task as Head of the turbulent Dual Empire and as Chief of the House of Habsburg. He forced himself to an even closer attention to his work, and sought out, with even greater eagerness, the smallest details concerning the welfare of the millions who depended on him, in order to escape the thoughts that bit deeply into his soul; and soon the Imperial Household, so long disturbed by the estrangement between the Emperor and Empress, then by the long and brilliant festivities of the Hungarian coronation, and, lastly, by the tragedy of Queretaro, resumed its former stately quiet, its routine of adamantine etiquette, as though these things had never been.

Elizabeth had proved to him that a great love is as inexhaustible in its mercy as the ocean, and as profound in its comprehension, and he found in her sweet presence and sympathy his greatest comfort. His mother's strong,

<sup>1</sup> *The Martyrdom of an Empress.*

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resolute spirit, perfect serenity in action, quick decision, if they had brought him one sorrow, had also spared him many troubles, fatigues, and disappointments, which would otherwise have been his. His children were strong, healthy, beautiful; and yet he looked at times weary, unhappy, much older than his thirty-seven years warranted, and there were threads of gray in his hair.

The Emperor is never seen to greater advantage than when exercising his rights and privileges as omnipotent Chief of the grandest Imperial Family in Europe, but which, it must be confessed, is also one of the most difficult to manage.

✓ Endowed with that winning tact, which is one of the most precious qualities a man can possess, and of an ascendancy he knew how to exercise even over those most opposed to him, he commanded the respect of each and every Habsburg of them all.

Between him and Archduke Karl-Ludwig there was, however, a vague, intangible antagonism, veiled on his part under an admirable courtesy and kindness, and on his brother's by a none too clever assumption of indifference, for the latter did not always forbear from sarcasm and criticism of what he was wont to sneeringly call "His Majesty's advanced ideas."

Of course, Karl-Ludwig had an unacknowledged resentment against the Emperor as the owner of all he considered that he himself was far more fitted to possess.

That the difference of three years in the date of their respective births should have given all to the elder one and nothing save wealth and the rank of Archduke to himself was a perpetual bitterness to him, and when he thought of it he almost hated the handsome, stately, chivalrous man, who towered immeasurably above him in every respect, and he watched him with the jealous suspicion of a narrow-minded man, everlastingly dread-



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ing to find himself placed at a disadvantage, or unduly forced into the background.

All this, of course, was more or less hidden under the polished serenity of high breeding; but, to a keen observer, it was not difficult to notice the consuming envy, the latent hostility, the barely slumbering enmity, betrayed by a word, a glance, a mere accent of the voice of *Blaubart*, as Karl-Ludwig was called by the Viennese, in allusion to the frequency of his matrimonial ventures.

To a lesser degree, for his nature is neither a strong nor a particularly bitter one, Archduke Ludwig-Victor was jealous of the unfeigned attachment of his subjects to the Emperor, of his good looks, of his social successes, of his mastery of all field sports, of his skill with horses, his remarkable intelligence, his wit, his daring, his magnificent record as a general and as a cavalry leader, in fact, of all the endowments and attainments which were somewhat lacking in himself, although, in justice to him, it must be said that this Archduke has never, for an instant, envied his brother either crown or sceptre, his ambitions running in an entirely different groove.

He, too, however, used to look often strangely at him, his eyes, of lightest possible blue, dwelling gloomily upon the Emperor, whom he considered to be the most brilliant and happiest of men, because all women were in love with him, his wife the most of all.

The very kindness and generosity of Francis-Joseph made him feel insignificant and humbled, so that now and again a momentary sting of regret for his ill-feeling, touched Ludwig-Victor as he looked at the grave, sometimes, of later years, decidedly stern, expression of that over-burdened man; but, alas! the pleasures of the gayest and wittiest city in the world absorbed him so completely, his butterfly-like dartings and flutterings amid the swarm of lovely women for which Vienna is so justly



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celebrated filled both his time and his brain so unceasingly, that he really had no opportunity to consider a matter so far beyond the pale of his happy hunting-ground as a better *entente* between himself and his Imperial brother.

One evening, however, the rift within the lute acquired more serious proportions. There was a *Ball-bei-Hof* at the Burg, accompanied by all the pomp and magnificence which characterizes such festivities. The long and gorgeous figures of the second quadrille, which, at the Viennese Court, is always transformed into a *cotillon*, were in progress, and Archduke Ludwig-Victor was dancing it with a more than attractive young widow, possessed of a beautifully shaped person (which she exhibited as freely as etiquette permits), of a wealth of dark, glossy curls, and of dazzling jewels displayed lavishly upon her white skin.

This fascinating lady was a saint neither by nature nor by habit, and, although she belonged to a family which was very *Hoffähig* indeed, she was not imbued with the pure, old traditions of gentle blood to the extent of foregoing the pleasures procured by singularly vivacious flirtations, lively card-playing, and of two or three other *péchés mignons* of an even less innocuous character. In one word, she was really a little bit wicked—just a little bit, hardly worth mentioning, but still enough to make her the object of cordial dislike on the part of the Emperor, the Empress, and the redoubtable *Madame Mère* (Archduchess Sophia). “I cannot imagine,” the latter would say, acidly, to her daughter-in-law, “how such manners can be admired or even tolerated here,” whenever she observed the slim, graceful figure of her *bête noire* treading voluptuously the mazes of an intoxicating waltz, or heard her quite unnecessarily shrill, tantalizing laugh echo under the sombrely superb, solemn ceilings of the Imperial Palace.

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On the night I mention, when Archduke Ludwig-Victor led her out to take her place in the *cotillon*, the light of the gigantic rock-crystal chandeliers falling on the armor of diamonds, the immense court-train of bright, rose-colored satin, and the lace *jupe* that so well set off her lithe figure, the Emperor glanced at the pair with displeasure, and, turning to the Empress, who was standing beside him, with her famous emeralds about her throat, in her glorious hair, and on her breast, and her long robe of palest pearl-hued brocade and silver tissue, looped up with clusters of Persian lilac over priceless laces—the very embodiment of what an Empress should be—he said, impatiently:

“I think that this mutual attraction will have to cease. The woman’s audacity is past all bounds; and, as to him, he is having his very soul turned inside out, like a glove, and will end by committing some irremediable piece of folly.”

Elizabeth had never looked fairer and lovelier than she did that evening, and there was so startling a contrast between her and that past-mistress of all arts of provocation, that perfidious Vivien, dancing yonder, and who had set her cap at a man not physically or mentally very attractive, merely because he was an Archduke and wealthy, that he frowned as he watched the little rose-pink satin dame gaze up with visibly artificial adoration at her delighted cavalier.

“You will find it difficult to disenchant him,” Elizabeth replied, quietly. “She is very *accaparente*, and possesses attractions which, to an inflammable man like your brother, must be quite irresistible, if you pardon me for saying so.”

“That is what we are going to see,” he exclaimed, angrily; and as soon as the ball was over—the Court of Vienna still retains many homespun virtues and retires

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very early—the Emperor sent for his brother, and gave him to understand, clearly and concisely, that under no circumstances could a marriage, even morganatic, between him and his *inamorata* be countenanced. Moreover, the finality of his tone, as he spoke, gave the impression that it would be easier to uproot mountains and pluck hills from their bases, like turnips, than for this decision to be ever reconsidered.

In the perplexity and perturbation of the moment, Ludwig-Victor's whole intelligence was absorbed in the effort of concealing from the Emperor the real importance of the promises he had allowed himself to make to the lady under discussion, and his rejoinders were unwise.

Finally, the Emperor, losing all patience, exclaimed:

“Do not let us fence in this useless fashion. You must know, you must have seen that such an alliance—if you are really simple enough to contemplate so impossible a step—would be your ruin, in any and every interpretation of the word. If I were to let you have your own way, even about what you wish me to consider as a mere flirtation, it would lead you into paths not pleasant to you or to us. Fortunately, it is difficult to attach much importance to your sentiments, for they are, as a rule, not remarkable for steadfastness and duration.”

Ludwig-Victor, embarrassed by the undeniable truths contained in these accusations, and fully conscious that it would be vain to controvert them, began to bluster something about the injustice displayed towards a woman who—a woman that—but was interrupted brusquely, and with an indignation from which a touch of *hauteur* was not absent; and this galled the younger man so greatly that he lost his temper and replied with considerable scorn and even insolence.

The Emperor took, at first, no apparent notice of his

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words; but when he saw that his self-control had been also utterly lost in the affray, he suddenly stepped forward and said some few things which cut the Archduke to the quick, reminding him, among other things, of his, Francis-Joseph's, triple title to interfere with his actions, —namely, those of elder brother, of Sovereign, and of military superior.

"In conclusion," the Emperor said, sternly and bitterly, "I warn you that if you do not obey me I will give you some command in Southern Hungary or in Northern Poland which will, I believe, cause an effectual break between you and a woman who, if I read her rightly, will scarcely sacrifice her comforts and pleasures to follow you to such regions. I knew you were singularly blind where women are concerned. I knew you were gullible; but I did not realize the lengths to which your unbridled fancies would lead you, nor the amazing extent of your fatuity. Moreover, if you do not wish to listen to harsher comments on your conduct, I will advise you to avoid our mother's presence for a few days. And now you can go," he concluded, in the same tone of curt command.

The naked rays of an unshaded lamp shone on his features, displaying to the culprit an expression of inexorable severity and of extreme displeasure, and in the short silence that followed the echo of one sentence he had just heard reverberated in Ludwig-Victor's ears—" *on n'épouse pas les femmes de cette sorte.*" He had been moved by it to an ecstasy of shame and fury, and, scarcely conscious of what he did, he took his leave, vowing to himself never to forget or to forgive what had just taken place.

Reason, that calm, sad counsellor to which so few ever hearken, never effectively governed Ludwig-Victor with regard to his many entanglements, which, on more than

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one occasion, caused his brother serious anxiety, for the Archduke untiringly pursued extraordinary fancies, which several times he came perilously near to transforming into stern realities. The mere presence of a pretty woman made him entirely forget, for the time being, what he possessed of prudence, as well as his knowledge of the world, and of what the world demands, so that time and again he had to be rescued from the sacrifice and humiliation invariably entailed by *mésalliances* even of a left-handed nature.

The already overwrought and overworked Emperor was, therefore, ceaselessly worried and annoyed by the untiring self-surrenders of this guileless younger brother, whose one ambition was to love and to be loved, and who could not permit such feelings as his to be trodden by the cloven hoof of worldly considerations. Truly, in this instance, the proverb which says, "Happy are the loves of the simple of heart," proved discouragingly untrue.

He had learned, however, to dread the lightning of his elder brother's eyes, which followed his airy gyrations with the repressed passion of a strong man controlling his scorn for what he absolutely disapproves and cannot comprehend; but the antagonism which, ever since the night of their first encounter on this subject had taken the place of a feeble and harmless jealousy, proved another thorn in Francis-Joseph's plentifully armed crown.

The gilded and jewelled trappings of sovereignty are at times a heavy yoke, and as year followed year the omnipotent Ruler of Austro-Hungary felt the weight of his splendid harness weighing more and more on his shoulders, the turbulent younger members of the Imperial Family contributing not a little to this discomfort, and occasionally rendering his duties as Chief of his House even more difficult than those he owed to the State.



## CHAPTER XI

WITH his brothers and sisters-in-law the Emperor stood on the very best of terms, even with the charming Princess, afterwards Princess von Thurn und Taxis, who had seen her younger and more fascinating sister preferred to herself by him, and who might reasonably have been suspected of a little rancor and coldness where he was concerned.

Queen Maria-Sophia of Naples, for instance, always was, and still is, a great and valued friend of Francis-Joseph's, and often, in moments of trouble, has he sought the advice of that extraordinarily level-headed woman, whose romantic story would alone furnish the material for a volume.

Queen Maria-Sophia, although by no means as absolutely beautiful as her sister, the late Empress, was a strikingly lovely woman. Tall and slender, and auburn-haired, admirably gifted and talented, and, besides this, possessed of a courage which cannot be designated by any other word than that of absolute heroism, she was, and will remain at all times, one of the most noteworthy personalities of the nineteenth century; nay, one might go further than that, for, even when reading the dust-flecked pages of ancient parchments and black-letter records, one does not encounter in any descriptions of those great queens who have long ago passed from this world a superior to this remarkable woman. Moreover, she joins to the beauty and graciousness of dainty womanhood the strength of character, the quick-



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ness of decision, and the indomitable pluck which is generally supposed to belong exclusively to the stronger sex. It might be added to this truthful and by no means overdrawn eulogium, that Maria-Sophia is also the most modest and unassuming Royal Lady in existence, a fact which was abundantly proved when it was discovered that it was really she who, during the short but terribly eventful period during which she was *de facto* Queen of Naples and of the two Sicilies, played the noble part which ought by right to have been the privilege and pride of her self-indulgent Consort. A few short paragraphs are, however, lamentably inadequate to give even a hint of the series of tragedies which fell to Maria-Sophia's share, or to do her such justice as she deserves.

Everybody knows that King Ferdinand II. of the two Sicilies, much perturbed by the growing agitation which made itself felt in 1858, and which even his iron hand seemed no longer able to repress, conceived the idea of opening negotiations concerning a matrimonial alliance for his son, the Duke of Calabria, afterward, during less than two years, King Francis II., thinking, perchance, that he could strengthen his own position by binding his family yet more closely than it already was (his second wife, Maria-Theresa being an Austrian Archduchess) to the powerful house of Habsburg. He therefore asked for the hand of young Princess Maria-Sophia, daughter of Duke Maximilian, in Bavaria, and, as I said before, the much-loved sister of Empress Elizabeth of Austria.

Indeed, when all negotiations about this matter had been satisfactorily brought to a conclusion, it was Empress Elizabeth herself who accompanied the fair bride as far as the Neapolitan frigate which was waiting in the harbor of Trieste, and who handed her over to the special Ambassadors sent by King Ferdinand to escort

her to Bari, where her young Consort was awaiting her. I use the word Consort designedly, for a marriage by proxy—the last one of these mediæval survivals to occur in Europe—had taken place at the bride's palace of Munich on January 8, 1859, Prince Luitpold of Bavaria representing the bridegroom, whilst the official ceremony only took place at Bari on the third of February following.

On February 2nd, the frigate *Fulminante* brought Maria-Sophia and her suite safely to the harbor of Bari, where she was received with a great deal of enthusiasm and much public rejoicings.

Unfortunately, this great occasion was somewhat saddened by the fact that the King was lying dangerously ill from a mysterious malady, which all his friends and retainers attributed to his having been poisoned by some agent of his numerous enemies during his trip from his capital of Naples to Bari. So serious, indeed, was the aged Monarch's condition that the departure of the royal party from Bari was postponed until March 7, when the dying King, together with the Queen and the young Duke and Duchess of Calabria, boarded the *Fulminante* and sailed for Naples.

In spite of the King's condition, there were numerous and magnificent fêtes given by the Neapolitans to welcome their future King and his bride; and it is a tragical and pathetic thing, indeed, to think that whilst the streets, the parks, and palaces of beautiful Naples were strewn with flowers, filled with music, and gay with fluttering flags, within the great dusky Palazzio of Caserta, the father of the radiant young couple, for whom all these demonstrations were being made, was lying on a bed of sufferings so great that they amounted to absolute bodily torture.

This man of iron, whose adamantine will-power had

held so long in subjection his eleven millions of subjects, and who had been called by many a cruel despot and tyrant, now tossed on his richly brodered pillows under the high-plumed canopy bearing the arms of his House, mumbling agonized prayers to Almighty God, craving pardon for his sins, and pouring out heart-rending entreaties and supplications for a prolongation of existence and a diminution of his dreadful torment.

Of course, nobody dreams of attempting to condone the governmental methods of King Ferdinand II., for his name has remained a by-word throughout Italy to this very day. But, nevertheless, had it not been for his wife, the ambitious, autocratic, and unscrupulous Queen Maria-Theresa, his extreme and superstitious piety might have served to preserve him from a course of policy that has rendered him unenviably celebrated in history for cruelty and hardness.

Whatever his crimes may have been, however, he received a punishment fully adequate to their greatness, when he, who had ruled with a rod of iron, and, as remarked above, with a despotism that was wholly mediæval, was thus cruelly stricken down.

His one comfort during these days of terrible affliction came from the presence near him of his young daughter-in-law, to whom he became deeply devoted, and it was at his bedside that she learned to be the wonderful nurse who, in besieged Gaeta, a few months later, tended with fearless energy the unfortunate soldiers of her husband's army, writhing under the pitiless lash of typhus and cholera, in addition to their cruel wounds.

To Francis-Joseph, too, in later years, when, discrowned and vanquished, she had forever left the land where she had so bitterly suffered, and when she had joined the ranks of those *Rois en exile* described with more tal-

ent than mercy by Alphonse Daudet, she was a true and loyal counsellor and a tender-hearted sympathizer.

For long years the ex-Queen of Naples lived in Paris with her husband, who, poor fellow, was so imbued with the belief that his former subjects yearned for his return, and would one day call upon him to resume his crown and sceptre, that for a long time he declined to buy or even lease a house, insisting upon living at a hotel, so as to be ready for instant departure if summoned to reascend his throne!

He died, after more than thirty years of exile, and as he left no issue—his only child, a little girl, having died at Rome shortly after his deposition—his claims and pretensions have now passed to his half-brother, Don Alfonso de Bourbon, Count of Caserta, who makes his home at Nice.

Humiliated for many years by grievous monetary troubles as well as by countless other irritating sorrows and disappointments, the ex-Queen was relieved of financial worries, at least, by the considerable fortune left to her by her mother, Duchess Ludovica, in Bavaria, and, being passionately fond of horses, like her sisters, Empress Elizabeth and the Duchess of Alençon—who perished so heroically in the Charity Bazaar fire at Paris—she was at length able to indulge this taste to the full, and became well and flatteringly known on the French turf, where her racing colors were often successful, under the pseudonym of "Count Isola."

Maria-Sophia is, moreover, the only woman who has ever received the Russian Order of St. George, a distinction conferred only for acts of altogether exceptional bravery under fire, and which Czar Alexander II. sent her, in recognition of the splendid part she played in the heroic defence of the fortress-town of Gaeta, the last

stronghold of the kingdom of Naples, in 1860-61, against the followers of Victor-Emmanuel.

To-day, in spite of her sixty-two years, she is still a very fascinating personality. Her small, proud head is crowned with a wealth of slightly silvered braids, her form is still erect, under the weight of pain and sorrow that it has borne for so weary a period of time, while a great deal of the grace and beauty of her lovely womanhood remains with this lonely, dethroned Queen.

With his brother-in-law, Prince Karl-Theodore, in Bavaria, the great oculist and philanthropist of whom so much has been said and written, the Emperor has always been on the friendliest of terms, and he has, on several occasions, made large donations to the princely *Hospice* where the poor receive such care and kindness at the hands of Karl-Theodore and of his charming and devoted wife—that *Hospice* where no more mundane sound than the ripple of the lake-water below is heard, or that of the little brooks dashing onward in the green twilight of the woods, and across meadows lying like plates of emerald below great, dark belts of Alpine firs, drooping Siberian pines, and eternally shivering larches, and which must, indeed, seem an earthly paradise to the poor wretches who recover hope, health, and sight at the same time in this pure, wholesome, beneficent atmosphere.

My great regret is that I cannot, alas, devote the necessary space to a separate sketch, even of a very succinct kind, concerning the most important members of the House of Habsburg, or of the various tribulations, joys, or difficulties which they contributed in turn to Francis-Joseph's long and arduous existence. Suffice it, therefore, for me to specially mention two members of the Imperial Family, two loyal subjects of his most Catholic Majesty, Emperor Francis-Joseph of Austria, who, during



the course of those many long years, caused him naught but happiness—namely, his old father, and Archduke Rainer, his favorite cousin.

Dear old Archduke Franz-Karl! It is not so many years ago that his carriage, drawn by six gorgeously caparisoned Spanish mules, still aroused the delight of all children, aristocratic or plebeian, who saw it pass at a quick trot along the road to Schönbrunn, accompanied by the shrilly sweet music of its silver-belled harnesses!

Endowed with a temperament so felicitous that it enabled him to find innocent pleasure and enjoyment everywhere, he delighted in doing kindnesses to everybody; and to see him gayly trotting up and down under the shadow of the trees in any of the Imperial parks, leaning on his gold-headed cane, and smiling on all the world with his serene, blue eyes, was, indeed, a sight to drive away dark thoughts and depression from one's mind.

His passionate attachment to his son was not the least touching of his many winsome traits of character, for this attachment was never marred by the very faintest taint of jealousy. Indeed, he always took particular care to remind him, with a merry chuckle, that he, Archduke Franz-Karl, was the very first and foremost, as well as the most obedient and devoted, of his subjects. And in saying this he was perfectly serious beneath his jesting manner, for he was monarchical to the very backbone, believed absolutely and blindly in the Divine Right of Rulers, and was as strong a Royalist as ever breathed. God bless his kindly memory!

During the last years of his life, he spent a portion of every summer at Ischl and Gmünden, those two prim and poetical, picturesque and gay little Upper-Austrian towns, which are the ideal of what such pleasure resorts should be and so rarely are.

Gmünden is within easy reach of Ischl, and is the love-



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liest little *Ville d'eau* imaginable, mirroring, as it does, its many beautiful villas and palaces in the deep, green waters of the celebrated Gmündner, or rather Traun-See, to give it its geographical name.

In the late seventies, the flower *corso* was instituted there, and this turned coquettish Gmünden every year into a veritable fairy city for a whole summer week at a time, and shook it completely from its shadowy, slumbrous impassibility, for Court and society alike took an active part in these fêtes, and no one more actively than the old Archduke.

It would be an almost impossible task to attempt to give by means of pen and ink an adequate idea of the picture presented by the luminous lake when crowded with hundreds of flower-laden boats, skiffs, and canoes. This marvellous sheet of water, in spite of its generous dimensions, seems but a huge gem, surrounded as it is on all sides by towering mountains, from which waterfalls, white with perpetual foam, rush to meet the sparkling, translucent surface below.

In the dim distance, the silvery gray of glaciers and the aerial blue of crevasses overhang sombre forests, which terminate on the sloping shore in a tangled wilderness of ferns and flowers.

With such a background it is hardly wonderful that these flower *corsos* should have been one of the most exquisite sights that one can imagine!

They always began at four o'clock in the afternoon, and were frequently opened by Archduke Franz-Karl in person. He was the first to assail all passing vessels with fragrant missiles taken from the enormous provisions of daintily colored ammunition, heaped up upon the prow of his own gorgeously decorated gondola — a gondola which, by the way, could have easily hauled aboard a score of the black-painted, gracefully shaped skiffs which

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perpetually glide hither and thither on the peaceful bosom of the Grand Canal at Venice, and of which he had been so fond of making use when Austria still ruled in Northern Italy.

The last time I had the honor and pleasure of seeing the aged Archduke was just after a great Court ceremony which, quite against his usual custom, he had attended, the Emperor having expressed a regret that his august father should so obstinately shun all state occasions.

As I have often remarked, no Court of Europe has retained to such an extent all the pomp and ceremony of past and gone centuries as that of Vienna, and the consequence is that its functions always constitute a very unique, picturesque, and stately spectacle.

The one I am alluding to was the official reception by the Emperor of a new Spanish Ambassador, and certainly was no exception to the rule. The Ambassador and his suite were fetched from the embassy in three of the Emperor's state carriages by the Assistant Master-of-the-Horse, and as that containing the Ambassador entered the court-yard of the palace, the regiment on duty turned out and rendered military honors. In the first ante-chamber the new Envoy was welcomed by the Grand Master-of-the-Ceremonies, while in the next room he was received by the Grand Chamberlain and by the Emperor's Aide-de-Camp. The Grand Chamberlain thereupon announced the Ambassador to the Emperor, and opened to their full width the folding doors leading into the Imperial Presence-Chamber—those doors which play so great a part in diplomatic and Court etiquette, since only two out of the four folds are opened for an ordinary Minister Plenipotentiary, while for a Secretary of Embassy but one fold is opened when the latter is admitted to the presence of the Emperor.

After handing his letters of credence to the Monarch,

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with the customary three profound bows, the Ambassador was permitted to present to him the members of his suite, and, after about ten minutes' stay, withdrew, with equal ceremony.

As I just said, it was immediately after this pageant that I encountered the old Archduke, most ruefully shaking his white head, and was informed by him that "Franz" was making most arbitrary use of his sovereign powers in "commanding" an old hermit like himself to be present at such wearisome moments.

I laughed heartily, as may be imagined, at which he affected to be greatly angered, and, flourishing his gold-headed cane menacingly at me, exclaimed, with an irresistible twinkle in his wonderfully youthful eyes, "Do you know, Madame, that I have almost promised in my weakness to attend the *Ball-bei-Hof*, which takes place this evening? It is all very well for a baby, like you, to be amused by such gayeties, but a venerable great-grandfather, such as I am, sings a very different song!" and, pinching my ear, a trick which he claimed to have inherited from his "dear friend" Napoleon I., he pirouetted on his heel, quite à la *Louis-Quatorze*, and left me, still laughing, to watch him from a window enter his amazing mule-drawn equipage and drive off, amid the cheers and delighted comments of the people assembled to see the procession of great personages and high dignitaries leaving the Hof-Burg, and who fairly adored him.

That night, the Empress being absent, her place was taken by Archduchess Maria-Theresa, who, besides the distinction of being the Sovereign's sister-in-law, possesses that of having been burdened at her christening, in defiance to the very reasonable wishes of her late father, ex-King Miguel of Portugal, with the rather complex and confusing cognomens of "Maria-Theresa-de-

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l'Immaculée - Conception - Ferdinande - Eulalie - Leopoldine-Adelaide-Isabelle-Charlotte-Michaella-Raphaelle - Gabrielle - Françoise-d'Assise-et-de-Paule - Gonzague - Inez-Sophie-Bartholomée-des-Anges"—which is a rather cumbersome array, especially if one is in a hurry and should consider it necessary to describe her by her full appellation!

Archduchess Maria-Theresa (we will dispense with ceremony and give her just the customary two names, out of the twenty or so, which are meant for familiar use!) seemed as if she by no means mourned the fact of the Empress's absence. It is well known that Maria-Theresa enjoyed nothing better than to be temporarily the first lady in the land, and her smiling countenance and extremely gracious behavior showed very plainly that this impression was correct.

It cannot be denied that her personal appearance is calculated to make her just the grand, proud figure which one associates with the idea of an *Impératrix*, but still, whenever a *Ball-bei-Hof* used to take place without our beloved *Kaiserin* occupying her post beside the Emperor, we felt a blank which nothing could fill, and our most loving thoughts turned to the lovely Sovereign whom we missed so greatly.

Maria-Theresa wore a magnificent gown of creamy satin, so thick and soft at the same time that it rippled about her like blades of light. It was entirely overlaid with antique lace, of remarkable artistic value, and was further enhanced by fine, pale, silver and crystal embroideries, of so delicate a design and so exquisite a workmanship that they gave one the impression of being mere shimmering frostings, due to Father Winter's decorative fingers. Enormous sapphires and row upon row of diamonds completed this *toilette*, the gigantic Court mantle of which was strewn with knots of orchids in the

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most ephemeral of tints, intermingled with beautiful brilliants, set dewdrop fashion. Above the coronal of heavy braids with which the Archduchess always crowned her small, patrician head, in imitation of the Empress, scintillated a triple circle of priceless sapphires and diamonds, shaped like a slightly pointed arch, and terminated at the topmost curve by a unique pearl of such unusual lustre and size that it is known by everybody as *Le joyau de l'Archiduchesse*.

As always, the uniforms of the officers, Court officials, and great Magnates were dazzling, the Emperor, who wore that of a cavalry general, being among the simplest. Margrave Pallavicini wore the grand costume of a Knight of Malta, whereas Count Harrach had donned the picturesque garb of the Teutonic Order.

There were many Hungarian Nobles, towering above the crowd of white shoulders, and whose dark and handsome heads were wonderfully set off by the rich fur-trimmed velvets and gleaming jewels of their *Tracht*, the Polish *Seigneurs* also, covered with priceless jewels and wrapped in costly, shimmering stuffs, added to the semi-barbaric *coup-d'œil*.

Just as we were watching a crowd of lovely young girls waiting to be presented, and who, according to the Emperor's own saying, made one think of a "flight of snowy butterflies about to take wing," Archduke Franz-Karl whispered to me:

"My life and joy no longer shine in women's eyes, Heaven be praised! else my danger would be great in such a temple of beauty! Look at them, the old and the young, all distractingly lovely!" and he gave his little, low chuckle of kindly malice. "Assuredly some modern alchemist must have rediscovered Niñon de l'Enclos' beauty potion, for even my contemporaries themselves have still such lovely figures, such bloom,



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such very brilliant eyes, that we must take it for granted they possess a secret to avoid old Father Time's triumphal car of Juggernaut."

"The expediency of our sex is not to be disputed," I replied, demurely. "It is a quality which has reached now the highest point of cultivation with us. Time and sorrow and wear are distanced and successfully kept at bay where beauty is concerned; but men should be satisfied with the results, and not pry into the secret of the means."

"Miraculous, no doubt!" he replied in the same bantering tone; "but why thus take fire in defence of whitened sepulchres? Must I gather from this that your sixteen years, or is it seventeen—surely, you cannot already be so aged—are the mere result of a *secret de beauté*?"

How well I remember his delight at this little joke of his, and what mischievous joy he took in teasing me, who, of course, considered myself already most matronly, but not quite, quite sufficiently so as not to still bitterly envy the maturer charm, caustic wit, and superb arrogance of women twice and even three times my age, who had so much of the knowledge I then lacked, and who often looked at me with the little smile of indulgent but very galling pity which the thorough-paced, experienced, long-broken-to-harness women of the world feel for the still childish being who is so lamentably deficient in the years that have made them what they are—namely, redoubtably perfect and imposing *grandes dames*.

In those days queenly Archduchess Elizabeth inspired me with awed admiration. She was—fortunately for her, I thought then, but have altered my opinion since—decidedly on the wrong side of forty, but, apart from being a most remarkable and sagacious woman, extraor-



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dinarily clever, wise, learned, and possessing a knowledge of statesmanship seldom equalled by men, and which her charming daughter, Queen Maria-Christina of Spain, in a great measure inherited, she was still a very beautiful woman, without the aid of any *secret de beauté*.

Very tall, with a singularly harmonious and reposeful bearing, large, calm, proud, meditative eyes, an exceedingly fair skin and delicately chiselled features, she was also what one may term as *de bon conseil*; and the Emperor, who not only was her cousin, but whom she had always dearly loved, consulted her whenever he was met by a new difficulty or a particularly vexatious question.

She had, moreover, the rather unique privilege of being trebly an Austrian Archduchess — which to my young judgment was a privilege indeed — for she was the daughter of Archduke Joseph Palatine of Hungary, had married first Archduke Ferdinand, younger brother and heir of the last Sovereign-Duke of Modena, and, after some two years of widowhood, had united herself with Archduke Charles - Ferdinand, son of Archduke Charles, the famous cavalry leader of the Napoleonic wars and the hero of the battle of Aspern.

Certainly, this treble Archduchess was one of the handsomest women in Austria, and one of the most respected and revered; and to see her as she was that night, in a Court dress of dark blue velvet, embroidered with silver lilies, and wearing a regal wealth of wonderful old jewels dating back to the time of Mary of Burgundy and of Empress Maria-Theresa, was in itself a lesson in stately deportment.

Archduke Franz-Karl admired her immensely, too, and we both remained silent as we watched her cross the dazzlingly illuminated *Redouten-Saal*, leaning on the arm of Archduke Rainer, another magnificent specimen of Habsburg nobility, a gallant, courageous, generous

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gentleman, beloved by all who know him, and whose name has long since become a synonym for limitless kindness and grand, old-fashioned courtesy.

Very tall, too, and very soldierly-looking is Archduke Rainer, and from none does the Emperor sooner seek advice upon military questions than from him. He is one of the most erudite princes in Europe, and Austria is indebted to him for the creation of Vienna's superb Museum of Art and Sciences, and for that of many similar institutions throughout the Empire. Indeed, this devotion to science and to art induced him to travel a great deal incognito, and, in spite of his enormous wealth, in the simplest and most unostentatious fashion, mostly accompanied by his charming wife, who is so devoted to him that she never feels happy for a moment when absent from his side.

Thus they visited Egypt, Algeria, Greece, Spain, and many other interesting lands, from which they brought back the enormous collections of priceless curios which fill their gorgeous palace at Vienna.

Of course, such a mode of travelling caused the Archducal couple to meet with some strange adventures. One, indeed, in which a young American tourist plays a conspicuous rôle, deserves to be set down here, if only for the glimpse it affords of Archduke Rainer's ever-present *politesse de cœur*.

While sitting on the veranda of a Swiss hotel, a few years ago, the Archduke, who, of course, was in *mufti*, was suddenly accosted by a well-dressed young man, who was perusing a pile of both English and American newspapers, in the following fashion:

"I heard you speaking English yesterday, and as it's a relief to me to converse in a language that I can understand, I made up my mind, when next I had the chance, to have a chat with you."



*Rainer*



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The Archduke bowed courteously, and awaited with admirably concealed amusement what would follow this singular *entrée en matière*.

"My word," continued the young man, "Europe is disappointing, isn't it? Now, in America we have scenery which beats these snow-mountains over there hollow, even at sunset, as at present, when the very waiters are so proud of their *Alpenglüh*, as they call it; to me they look like strawberry and vanilla ice-cream, heaped too generously, and not very artistically, in a green, wooden cup. Don't you think so?"

"Well," replied the Archduke, who had but vaguely understood this striking comparison, "you see, I am sorry to say, that I have never visited America, and so I have to be content with plain little views like this one."

"Never been across the pond? You don't say! But you are laughing at me, perhaps? I can assure you that we have mountains and lakes and trees that take the shine completely out of that sort of thing yonder. I'm going to do Europe thoroughly, nevertheless, now that I am here. From this place I'm going over to Austria; they say that Tyrol is fine. Well, we'll see. I'm curious to meet the bigwigs in Vienna; one of my best friends was Secretary of our Legation there, and he told me that the aristocracy and the Imperial Family are extremely gay."

This announcement was perhaps not of the most apposite, and might, moreover, have set the teeth of any other Habsburg Prince than Archduke Rainer on edge, but there was something so pleasing in the frank, genial, unconventional manners of the young man that no offence was taken, even when he quietly proceeded to confidentially inform his smiling interlocutor that he had heard the most dreadful reports with regard to the immorality of the Habsburgs, and denounced almost

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every scion of this Imperial House, from the Emperor downward, as being "blown black and blue by nor'-westers," which, he explained, meant to be quite lamentably off color!

Archduke Rainer, who had listened imperturbably, continued blowing smoke rings from his Havana into the pure Alpine air, and mildly remarked, without disputing, however, or in any way taking up the cudgels of defence, that he had never heard of these things before, although he himself was a native of Vienna, and concluded this discreet speech by expressing a cordial hope that his "Young friend" would not find the pretty Austrian capital quite so bad as it had been painted. Then, emerging with a pleasant smile from his halo of smoke, he bowed again in the friendliest way, and sauntered down a path leading to the lake.

The young man looked after him slightly puzzled. This tall, commanding, gray-clad, erect figure, this handsome face, barred across by an immense moustache, might after all, perchance, be that of one of the aristocrats he had just so thoroughly "cut over the ears"—to use his own graphic expression. That certainly would be a pity, for he was a splendid old chap, and the light-hearted American lad would be sorry, indeed, to have offended him; so, turning to a personage who had throughout the interesting colloquy been sitting on the unknown's other side, and whom he knew belonged to the old gentleman's party, he exclaimed:

"Your friend seems a mighty nice fellow, and I hope I haven't vexed him. But, you see, he didn't seem to believe what everybody knows, and that is that strangers who visit a country find out more in a few weeks of residence about its customs, its people, and its society than do the natives, if they live a hundred years. Now, you, I'm sure, will agree with me, *ong*



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*intem*, that the Viennese are all pretty gay, jolly as they make 'em, in fact. I can't dream for a moment that my diplomatic friend tried to guy me, either, and I will back his opinion, through thick and thin, even before I go and see for myself. It's your friend who is misinformed, as it's natural that he should be, being a native. I guess a lot of what happens in his little town doesn't come to his old ears."

"That is very possible," remarked the stranger, who was no other than the Archduke's Aide-de-Camp, Count X——, wearing a plain tweed travelling suit, "for people in Austria are not in the habit of talking to members of the Imperial Family as you, my dear sir, have just done to Archduke Rainer, the Emperor's cousin."

The young American jumped to his feet, a look of genuine concern overspreading his clean-shaven, boyish face.

"I *am* sorry!" he cried. "I never thought that this quiet, simple, genial old rooster—I beg your pardon—this nice, plain, old gentleman was an own cousin to a throne!—a real, genuine, bona-fide, simon-pure, hall-marked, first-class, Imperial prize-trotter! I'll go, this instant, and apologize!" And before the Aide-de-Camp, who was by now laughing heartily, could stop him, he was tearing after the unsuspecting Archduke, on conciliatory thoughts intent.

It would seem that the apologies presented by him to his late victim were of a pleasing quality, however, for shortly afterwards Count X—— saw, with much amusement, the Austrian Archduke and the American youth walking together up the steep lake path, and, wonderful to relate, the arm of the Archduke was linked affectionately in that of the lad, who was explaining at the top of his voice that these mountain hotels were al-

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ways set on high, "like bugs on a potato vine," and that he wished his companion would lean upon him in good earnest, "for fair, you know, and not as if you were young and shy."

Later on, greatly to the Aide-de-Camp's astonishment, the Archduke declared that he must really visit America some day, for a very interesting country it must be; and as to that young man, well, he was extremely refreshing and novel, and a nice, good-hearted boy, who changed one very pleasingly from the ordinary "routine," etc., but what he meant when talking about "big bow-wow folk," he, the Archduke, could not understand, and would Count X—— kindly ask him, if he saw him again, for it was sure to be something amusing and out of the common.

Another member of the Imperial family who always had a decided foible for America was Empress Elizabeth herself.

A few years before her tragic death, a friend, who, thanks to great reverses of fortune and other adverse circumstances, was living in the United States, received from her a letter, from which is taken the following extract:

"The free, unhampered life of America must have its charms. I wonder if it will make you forget that you ever lived another existence. Yours is now, as I understand it, wholly unlike in climate, scenery, and customs, anything we know on our side of the sea, even when we do not confine ourselves to our own land, but travel greatly. I am afraid that I am very ignorant of all that concerns the United States; but this ignorance is certainly equalled by my curiosity, and I would like nothing better than to come and stay with you for a little while. Perchance I shall do so some day. With the yacht it would not be so difficult; they in Vienna would all believe that I am cruising in Norway or Iceland, where I have always also wished to go. Tell me if the close-woven forests, the dense fields of reeds, and the immense lakes, bordered with huge pink-and-golden lilies, I have read

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about, are really as they are described? I can hardly bring myself to believe that even in South America there still exist those superb virgin forests, the silence of which is never disturbed save by the cry of a wild bird or the rustle of an uncoiling snake; so do not think me very silly if I ask you whether there remain in North America to-day roving, dangerous tribes of Indians, or if all those stories are exaggerations? I read, some time ago, a book about American Western life, which made me eager indeed to go and see with my own eyes those great ranches—horse-breeding farms, are they not?—those herds of untamed cattle, those picturesque cow-boys, who must be something like our own Magyar *Czikos*, although of a far better class, in spite of their rough-and-ready ways and their delightful quickness with their revolvers, for here, as you surely remember, the *Czikos* is an ignorant peasant, whereas your cow-boys are often gentlemen. *Ilyen ember ilt nem tálalèt ott!* I would like very, very much to come over, and I am not at all sure that I will not do so. There must be some spot on the coast where I could land unobserved, and then travel on to New York in strictest incognito, with but one or two attendants. How happy it would make me to see you again, my dearest one, and none would need to be the wiser, for I would stand quite aloof and look on merely, in order to see how that energetic young country gets on, 'and all submitted to a people's will,' as Tennyson wrote about something vastly different, of course; but the line fits! Then you would come with me on the yacht, and we would sail about, and go as far as Florida to see the gray beards on the cypresses that you mentioned to me. I am sure I would like it over there, especially in the country where there are such magnificent horses—Kentucky, is it not? It is all very well to cling to monarchical principles in Europe, although of late years in England, in France, and elsewhere too, the aristocracy—an aristocracy no longer in *our* sense of the word—is largely intermixed with enriched tradesmen, titled Hebrews, and gilded *Bourgeois*; but in great, big America it is quite different, naturally, and their politics seem to be a matter of real, all-important, and individual conviction to them, not a mere mechanical repetition of what has been droned into their ears for centuries. But enough of all this for the present. Write and tell me what you think of my project. Not for worlds, of course, would I try to persuade you and have you repent afterwards."

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The consternation of the recipient of that letter may be better imagined than described. To have the Empress arrive thus secretly in America, and take up even temporary quarters in a small New York house "up-town," within a stone's-throw of cable cars and other exasperating modern conveniences—she who never allowed even gas or electric lights to disfigure any of her palaces, who, simple as were her tastes, could not bear anything that was not absolutely artistic—not to mention the responsibility entailed by such a visit.

The thought was appalling, and so the wretched recipient crushed down her own wishes, her tenderness, and her longings for a peep at the one feminine friend she had ever had and loved, and did all in her power to prevent this project—which might so easily have caused grave complications—from being put to execution.

Life's problems are sometimes a little hard, a little cruel for those who are torn between reason and inclination, and cost many bitter tears whichever way they are solved.

One hears once in a while single words and phrases which, like the touch of a disenchanting wand, make the whole structure of one's painfully acquired, patiently cemented views and feelings crumble in a second to a heap of choking gray dust. That letter had this effect upon its recipient. Before the thought of what had been, the intense desire of ever so short a return to the sweet communion of heart which had been so brutally interrupted, the somber sides of her own life were suddenly revealed to her. She resolutely shut her eyes to the fact, but it influenced her none the less, caught as she was in a harsh *engrenage*, from which there was as yet no escape, and for a long time she was conscious of a feeling of mutilation, of a loss as painful as the mutilation or loss of a limb, and it cost her many a rough

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battle with herself till she, for the second time, succeeded in uprooting her miserable and deplorable weakness.

Alas! hope is like the graceful, iridescent Nautilus, all sufficient unto itself in its delicate shell, skimming over the surface of the sea, and fearing neither storm nor wreck; but often a wanton blow, an unexpected shock breaks the daintily tinted vessel, and the fairy voyage is at an end, the little navigator sunk, like any less deliciously ethereal creature. Then a new "ship of pearl" must spread its scintillating wings upon the wave-crests to beckon us onward alluringly, until that one also has met with wreck, and so another and another, until we, grown too old, too listless, too weary to continue the pretty game, are ourselves ready to launch upon that wave, the last of all, which casts us far away upon the dim unknown.

It is, indeed, a far cry from this little Nautilus intermezzo, from the hopes and disappointments of a—nobody, to the resumption of a great and powerful Monarch's life-story, yet it must be done. So, *Festina lente, Pazienza!* we will soon have ended that, too.

A man like Francis-Joseph, upon whom sorrows unnumbered and heart-breaking have so thickly fallen, should, in order to live his life out without too much suffering, too great an agony, have possessed no real feeling, which is very far, indeed, from being the case.

All that daily ceremony, that hourly etiquette, that ceaseless being on parade, that incessant pretence of being interested, charmed, cordial, pleased, which forms the routine of his days, all the net-work of intrigue with which he is surrounded, does not lighten his task, nor can those who are their own masters realize what it must be to him to be obliged to smile on persons whose presence is undesired, to divide his attention with unimpeachable fairness between two score and more of



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Archdukes and Archduchesses, of Princes and Princesses, whose little dissensions, needs, wants, wishes, or grievances are laid before him whenever there is the slightest chance to do so; what irritation, perplexity and inexpressible boredom must be his when it is demanded of him that he shall plunge into so many individual storms and dissensions, when every passing day opens a little wider the gates of disillusion and of regret before him.

If that were all! If that, at least, were the entire list of his trials! But what would become of his huge and turbulent dominion if such was the case? Sixteen nationalities, more or less alien and hostile to each other, are not amusing toys, or pets to be quieted with sugar, but a many-headed hydra, exceeding ravenous and even blood-thirsty, which cannot be led about by chains of meadow daisies or sent to sleep to the sound of soothing lullabies. Indeed, the hopelessness of ever completely reconciling them seems great, and there is but one man who has ever bridled this cruel and ungrateful monster — namely, Francis-Joseph, who truly is “the Keystone of his Empire.”

And in all those years which have lumbered so heavily upon the oft-blocked lines which this plucky engineer had to follow, never has his hand faltered in its safe, firm guidance, never has he allowed the great Car of State to derail, never have his manifold personal sorrows been permitted to make him pause even for an instant.

When, in the spring of 1872, Archduchess Sophia was stricken down by a fatal attack of pulmonary congestion, he remained with her day and night during the brief course of her malady, and when her proud eyes were closed forever he stood looking down upon the white, serene face with the dulled, paralyzed stupor of despair. He thought of how boundlessly she had loved him, of



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how she had cleaved to him, suffered for him, fought for him, this strong, clever, masterful mother, now lying senseless to all sound, even to his beloved voice, powerless to lift her hand in tender greeting even to him; a thing now to be thrust away out of remembrance of all those who had known her, all those who had trembled before her, into the dark, merciless silence of the grave.

An anguish such as falls upon men in their own death struggle fell upon him then, and smote him upon his knees, his head bowed, his arms stretched out, his broad chest rising and falling as though heaving and struggling against the torture of iron bands; and with deep, gasping sobs he sank forward, calling to her passionately to awake and return to him.

When he came forth from that chamber of death, those who saw him averted their faces from that look on his, from that unnatural light that shone in his eyes.

The Empress often told me how, at that moment, she thought she would have willingly given all she had to resuscitate her bitter enemy, so that he, her husband, might again be happy; and how, with that strange blending of fitness and incongruity which so often assails one at such hours, the old words of the "*Romaunt de Duguesclin*" involuntarily rose to her mind:

*"N'a filairesse en France qui sache fil filer.  
Quiy me gagnait ainçois ma finance a filer!"*

For was there a woman, young or old, who could hesitate to give her all to gain him ransom from so overpowering an agony? She, at least, could not believe it.

That look of hopeless desolation, some of those who saw it then were destined to see it again, increasing in

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bitterness of suffering, as first his beloved old father, and then his handsome, strong, stalwart son, the pride of his heart and of his House, lay dead before him.

But when the final and most fearsome blow of all stunned and crushed this unfortunate man, when the lifeless form of his beautiful wife was brought back to him in its ethereal and solemn lace-shrouded loveliness, her glorious eyes closed as though in slumber, bearing no visible sign of the assassin's ignoble deed, save in the waxen whiteness of her little crossed hands and of her delicately curved lips, looking merely like a lily broken by ruthless fingers, the hideousness of this supreme loss seemed to arise embodied before him and to gibe and gibber in his face, bidding him stand aloof and not gaze upon the proof of the calamity which was leaving him alone on earth, with no companion save the eternal remembrance of this marmorean, irresponsive, immovable face, which he had adored in all the fulness, the dazzling beauty, the glory of her exquisite womanhood!

He staggered back and refused to see it thus for the last time, and fled, wandering through the great, silent palace, without rest or comfort, and followed in his soul-rending solitude by one eternal, wailing echo of his doom: "Alone! Alone!"

There are natures which, in their anguish, seek the fellowship of their kind; there are others which shun it, and these are the proud, the tenacious, the unyielding, the great, and the best. Such is Francis-Joseph's, whose *entourage* and family marvelled to see him after each new sorrow arise, unaltered in manner, unchanged in his tireless ardor for work, always the same kind, generous, calm, quiet, duty-loving man.

Pitiful to others, he abhors pity for himself; merciful to all miseries, he asks none for his own, and keeping back his unconquerable pain until none are by to stand

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between him and its unfathomable depths, which grow deeper every day that dawns, with every passing hour—watching him when he sleeps, so that his sleep is short and disturbed, and while he wakes, so that his days are joyless—he gives no outward sign of the ever-present distress and loneliness that racks and haunts him, or of the barbed steel sunk forever in his warm, tender heart.

## CHAPTER XII

ALONE, indeed, and in the saddest sense of the word, is Emperor Francis-Joseph now, condemned to a perpetual mental and heart isolation, by a fate so grim, so relentless that it has taken his life like a beautiful fruit and has pressed it dry to the core of all joy, all hope, all gladness, all human happiness, and all reward for the great deeds he has accomplished, the great good he has done; a fate which has been, of a truth, more cruel than death itself.

Alone in his magnificent palaces he often sits, heart-sick and weary of that life from whence all that made it worth the living has disappeared, a life that is forever overshadowed by a grief so immense that it conceals from him the very light of heaven.

Yet the sense of his rank and his habitual reserve keep him mute always about his sufferings, and he toils on, smiles on, masks his anguish with a strength, a calm, and a kindness seemingly as shadowless as of yore, and which will enable him to remain to the end the one tie uniting the Austro-Hungarian people, whose loyalty and affection are accorded, not to the House of Habsburg, but solely and exclusively to the person of the present Sovereign.

Alas! I hope and trust that we may not live to see that day when, this one remaining bond of union being removed, the Empire which he has built up and of which he is so proud will fall and crumble pitifully asunder, burying in the cataclysm the mock friendliness of those sixteen alien races, the union of which, when once he is

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no longer there to hold them close together in the hollow of his hand, will, it is feared, cease to exist.

Volumes could be written illustrating the extraordinary fashion in which this patriarchal Monarch has constantly remained in touch with the lowliest as well as with the highest of his subjects, and of the degree in which he has shown himself to be the real father of his people.

He makes a point of conversing with them in each of their languages or dialects, changing from German to Hungarian, from Italian to Croatian, from Polish to Czech, and from Bosniac to Slovák or Roumanian, with absolutely effortless facility.

He travels a great deal, too, visiting first one and then another of his provincial capitals, one day sojourning in verdure-encircled Prague, the illuminations in honor of his presence mirroring their red, blue, and green sparks in the broad waters of the Moldau, and outlining the tall, gilt cross of the Teyn Church and the mosque-like spires of the thousand towers, which make the old city look so fairy-like at night; another time appearing upon the esplanade at Abbazzia, fragrant with the penetrating odors of orange and myrtle, where the blue waves of the Adriatic beat a lulling measure below the splendid villas and hotels of our Austrian Nice. Again, disembarking from his yacht at the Francis-Joseph Quay, as the stars begin to twinkle above the Blocksberg, he shares his favors between the beautiful twin towns of Buda and of Pesth, for his affection is divided with strict fairness between these cities, which raise their slender minarets on both sides of the glittering, moonlit band of molten silver, separating them by its fleet current; or when the rich, golden, Hungarian autumn, with the glow of its burning sunsets, turns the purple and yellow grapes of the far-stretching vineyards into so

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many gleaming jewels, the Imperial yacht descends the Danube as far as Peterwardein, between steep, rocky cliffs rising sheer from the fast-running wavelets of the sapphire-hued river, or skirts low, marshy grounds covered with pale, shivering willows like those so dear to Corot, and intersected by multitudinous streamlets flowing from the flat fields that bear the flax and grain which make the riches of those regions.

The Emperor orders the anchor to be cast before tiny townships, or large villages nestling between hills or in leafy dells, so that he may praise the vine-growers and watch the over-ripened fruit as it is carried to the presses by laughing girls and boys wearing the bright, picturesque Magyar costume.

In the autumn, too, as in the late spring, this indefatigable Ruler hurries off to the great military manœuvres, now in Galicia, now in Moravia, Hungary, Bohemia, or any other spot previously agreed upon, and from the minute of his arrival the adoration he inspires to his troops, and which binds closely together with a frank, brotherly fellowship the soldiers of each battalion, each squadron, each battery, becomes at once apparent.

If a mere private wants anything, he knows that the Emperor will do for him what a father would do for a favorite child; he knows also that his keen eyes perceive at a glance of what mettle he, this humble unit in a colossal organization, is made, even be he but just fresh from the hand of the instructor.

Francis-Joseph loves his soldiers with a great, silent love, which is fast-rooted in the granite of his nature, and his attitude towards them is that of a grave courtesy, a preference for the fewest words and least demonstration possible, a marked opinion that silence is golden and speech only silver-plated metal, save when weighted by heroic action, which attitude, taken in unison with the



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*passion du métier*, the dauntless pluck, the emotionless calm, and the limitless power of suppressing all impatience, injustice, or arbitrariness of which Francis-Joseph has given so many proofs, abundantly explains why his very name is worshipped by all those who wear his uniform, from the Feldzeugmeister, in his gorgeous, fur-trimmed, gold-laced crimson and white, and his brilliant, green-plumed headgear, to the sober gray of the private of chasseurs, or the yet duller, plainer, brown and dark blue of the Honved.

Latin or Teuton, Magyar or Czech, were always and are ever very much the same to the Emperor when the ring of the bugle is in his ear and the glitter of the sun is upon the line of steel fringing regiment after regiment as they form up for a grand parade on the Schmelz or for a life-and-death struggle in the field, so long as all hearts beat alike with hope of pre-eminence, success, and victory. With equal pride he glances at the superb sweep of his Polish Uhlans, his Hungarian Hussars, or his Bohemian Dragoons wheeling to the attack, and although he is a strict disciplinarian, and can be stern and unbending when reproof is necessary, yet his mercy is never vainly appealed to when the iron wall of military law offers a loop-hole of which he can avail himself to remit a punishment or avoid harsh censure.

A little while since, during the manœuvres in Hungary, after a hot and fatiguing day in the saddle, the Emperor was crossing a stone-flagged yard leading to his temporary quarters, unaccompanied even by an orderly, when suddenly a soft, shy touch upon his arm made him turn in surprise, to be confronted by a queer little barefooted form, very ragged, and surmounted by a curly head which barely reached up to the Imperial elbow.

The Monarch smiled, and said, gently, with a reassuring smile, for he dearly loves children, even when they

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have little, grimy, sunburned faces and look the very reverse of prosperous:

"Well, my little man, and what do you want of me?" There was an infinite pity in his eyes as he bent over the child.

The boy gave a long sigh, looking pathetically up at him, with lips parted, and two large tears gathering in his frightened blue eyes:

"I came—I came—please don't be angry—I came to bring this; do take it, please; please do!" and flushing to a glowing pink, the poor little fellow held out tremblingly a roll of coarse paper, upon which something was written in a sadly untutored hand.

The Emperor gazed at this strange petitioner in a silence which the boy mistook for offence, and, pale now with excitement, he leaned nearer, with passionate, apologetic entreaty:

"Don't be angry!" he repeated, a rising sob making his voice tremble; "please take it!"

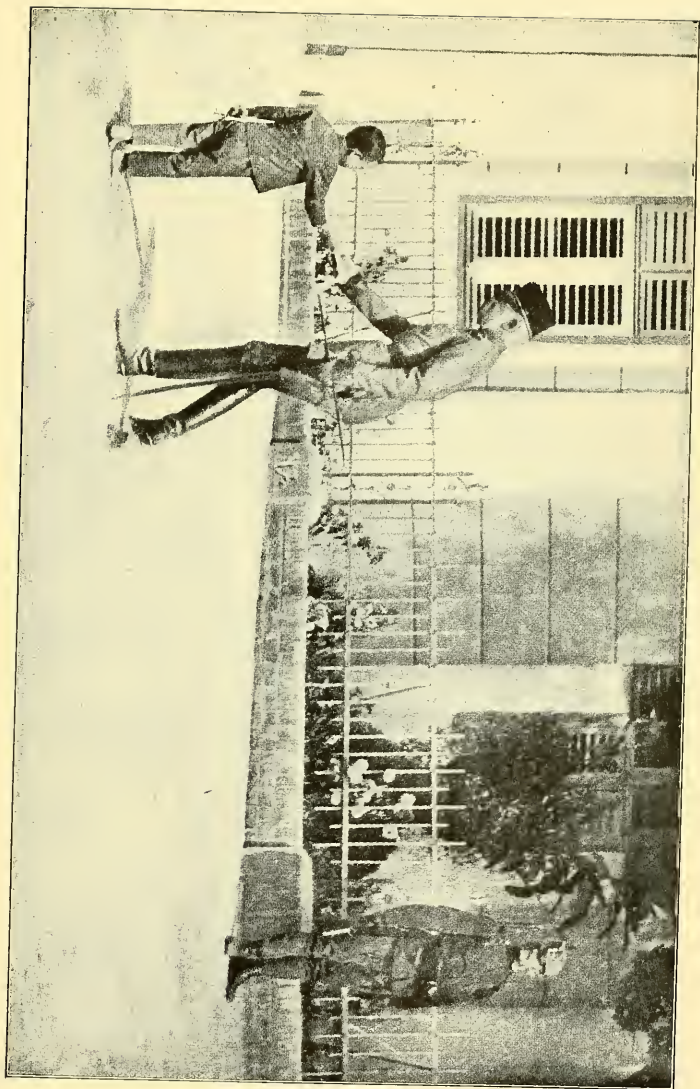
The aged Sovereign, in silence still, stooped lower, and possessing himself with one hand of the uninviting document, drew the shaking little lad to him with the other. When he spoke his own voice was unsteady:

"Who sent you to me?" he asked, softly.

"Mother; we are very poor." The child was trying his best not to cry, but the tears brimmed over now and fell on his thin, tanned cheeks. "We have nothing—nothing, so we must die of hunger, mother and I and my baby sister!" he concluded, while one little bare foot traced nervously a zigzag arabesque on the dusty pavement.

The hand of his august interlocutor wandered gently over the tangled curls as he rapidly attempted to decipher the piteous hieroglyphics of the blurred, scrawled, miserable petition, the words erased with passionate up-

A LITTLE PETITIONER





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and-down strokes, blotted with hot tears and scored out in impulsive misery.

The boy was watching, startled and awed, and as they stood there together the contrast between the white-haired Emperor, in his bright-hued uniform, and the little petitioner, in his loose, torn shirt and sorely patched trousers, barelegged, barefooted, bareheaded, the mighty Ruler of millions of men and the hungry child of the poor, was striking and startling enough not to be easily forgotten by the two aides-de-camp who, unseen, had stopped under the dusky porch of the yard.

"I am not angry, my little one; don't cry," murmured the Emperor, and as he spoke he stooped again and brushed the tear-stained, imploring face turned upward to him with his mustached lip. "I will see that your mother, your little sister, and yourself are provided for, and when you grow up to be a man you will be one of my best soldiers, for you are a brave little fellow!"

The boy had listened with the color coming and going, fleeting and burning, from the wavy fringe of his yellow hair to his thin, brown neck, his narrow forehead crossed by wrinkles of perplexity.

"Have you a father?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes, Majesty!"

"And where is your father?"

"I—I do not know!" The boy looked away, hanging his head and working the toes of his little bare feet yet more nervously in the dust.

"Has he left your mother?" the Emperor questioned, drawing his own conclusions.

"Yes, Majesty, he—he has left us a long time ago," he owned, in a dull voice, keeping his tear-filled eyes averted.

"Poor little fellow! Tell your mother that she need have no more fears, that I promise to send her all she needs. Will you remember what I say?"

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"Oh yes, yes, Majesty!" the child cried, with the joyful precipitancy of intense relief; then with quite disconcerting violence the pitiful little waif seized his patron's white-gloved hand, kissed it passionately, and, like a wild creature terrified by his own rashness, fled, leaving the Emperor to look after his small, swiftly running form with suddenly dimmed eyes.

Francis-Joseph knows how to talk to the poor, which is an art possessed only by the most delicate and sensitive hearts, and his manner towards them is so paternal, simple, and encouraging that all shyness or alarm flies before it.

To one and all of his less-fortunate subjects he lends a kindly and attentive ear, and never permits himself to show the least sign of weariness, however trivial and uninteresting the troubles confided to him may be—another talent of more value to the great than one might suppose.

When, however, this wonderful patience of his is mentioned within his hearing, he laughs, and contents himself with saying: "It is the moral badge of all our tribe," which is not strictly true, since there are numerous princes who cannot boast even a hundredth part of his perfection in an art of which he is past-master.

Many a time, on his private errands of mercy, which few know of, he has been, like Archduke Rainer at the Swiss Hotel, mistaken for a vastly smaller personage—a pardonable error, after all, for do puissant and mighty Sovereigns (in the usual notion of them) go about attended by no retinue, dispensing their own charities in a most un-Imperial and unassuming guise? Indeed, one must be deeply versed in ways Francis-Josephian to recognize him on such occasions. *C'est le cas de le dire!*

To see him familiarly seated in a mountaineer's or villager's kitchen, for instance, quite at his ease, sunnily



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genial, displaying the most sincere interest in the children, the cattle, the old, palsied granny huddled in the corner of the hearth, or her aged mate, who, gnarled like a venerable oak, has served, many, many years before, in his Emperor's army, perchance fought at his side, is unspeakably delightful. There are, moreover, notes of peculiar richness in his voice when he speaks to such people.

One can scarcely be a good monarchist unless one has seen and heard him under such circumstances; but if this opportunity is accorded, the most obdurate of radicals are bound to become ardent partisans of monarchy, almost without being aware of the fact.

Francis-Joseph in his palace, with a background of precious mosaics, of mellow and superb frescoes, of gold-wrought panels, of silks and satins enriched and beautified by exquisite embroideries, of priceless bronzes, of marbles, of sparkling Venetian mirrors, of odorous flowers, of soft, bright coloring, and all the rest of his superb state, is a grand and now very pathetic figure; but when he is among the humble, be it in Alpine chalet or Moravian farm-house, in village hut, or dark city slum, this man, who is certainly no saint, who has his weaknesses, his foibles—his faults even, if you will—is in some ways a saintlier saint than many of those awaiting official beatification beyond the realms of azure which are supposed to separate us from heaven.

But if there are pretty scenes to be witnessed when the palace goes to the cottage, there still are many more when the cottage goes to the palace—on the occasion of the famous Thursday receptions, which I have elsewhere described,<sup>1</sup> when any of His Most Catholic Majesty's subjects, who presents him or herself, has the opportunity

<sup>1</sup> *The Martyrdom of an Empress.*

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of a private audience, and the great antechamber presents a microcosm of the Empire, thronged, as it is, with representatives of every class, from the highest dignitaries of Church and State to the poorest farmer and artisan.

It is only to be expected that, among the ignorant, the lowly and the very poor, flocking to the presence of their Sovereign, quaint and pathetic incidents should often occur.

For instance, on one occasion an old peasant woman, with an anxious, wrinkled and troubled face, arrayed in the picturesque costume of her district, and carrying a small, shawl - wrapped bundle carefully in her arms, as if it had been an infant, was admitted to the antechamber. She at once betook herself timidly into a corner, being evidently extremely eager to avoid notice; but suddenly the decorous quiet was broken by most ear-piercing shrieks and squeals, apparently proceeding from the vicinity of this retiring and shy old dame. The astonished attendants immediately investigated the cause of the disturbance, and found her struggling with a very lively little sucking pig, profusely adorned with pink and blue ribbons, which had begun to resent the confinement of the various envelopes in which it had obtained its surreptitious entrance into the most exclusive Court of Europe!

The poor woman tearfully explained that she had come a long way to crave the pardon of her son, a soldier, who had committed some offence against military discipline, and that she had brought the piglet—the only apparently suitable possession she had—as a propitiatory offering for her good Kaiser. The indignant officials would have removed the shameless young four-footed offender, but Francis-Joseph, whose attention had been attracted by those strange and unusual

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sounds, ascertained their cause, and personally interfered in the old lady's behalf, so that the pig not only received the honor of an Imperial audience and acceptance, but the donor procured the granting of her petition, and soon went on her way rejoicing.

This reminds me that the Emperor is annually the recipient of many a similar tribute in kind. Every year, for example, on St. Martin's day, a delegation, chosen from among the Jewish population of whatever city Francis-Joseph may happen to be residing in at the time, presents him with two geese, the largest and finest procurable, securely bound and decorated with bows and fluttering lengths of many-colored ribbon. This very ancient ceremony expresses the gratitude of the Hebrews for the protection afforded to their race throughout the Empire, and we may imagine that in the olden times of the "*Judenhetz*" it voiced a very heart-felt gratitude indeed. The geese, however, on these occasions, feel themselves animated by no such cordial sentiments; quite otherwise, in fact, for their loud lamentations and vehement protests at having thus "greatness thrust upon them" is in such startling discord with the conventionalities of the Imperial antechamber that the waiting throng are only too glad to yield them precedence and to see the last of them as speedily as possible.

It is in this accessibility of the Sovereign, this opportunity for direct and individual appeal to the highest authority, that the primitive side of the people's life—the side farthest from such modernities as Reichsraths, popular science, and popular education—finds expression, and that the observer is enabled to appreciate the dual nature of this truly Dual Empire.

To see Francis-Joseph thus engaged in righting little wrongs and petty grievances that often, one would think, might have been dealt with by some local magis-

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trate, is to be carried in spirit to Oriental countries or back to patriarchal times, and to realize how much he is and feels himself to be father of his people—to become convinced also of how completely he is the architect of his Empire as it stands to-day. This is, indeed, personal government, “as it was in the days of Haroun-al-Raschid, of blessed memory, whose times exist still,” and will exist long after modern political systems have passed away.

The Emperor accepts this paternal position with an earnestness as touching as the people’s confidence, and many are the anecdotes that could be told in illustration thereof.

While shooting one day, quite unattended, in the woods of one of his Styrian estates, he came upon a couple of poachers, who might, had they chosen, made their escape, or even have attacked him, as has so often happened in Europe to territorial Magnates in lonely portions of their forest preserves, but, recognizing the Emperor, they fell on their knees and humbly begged his pardon. Finding themselves answered in a kindly tone, the men took heart to explain that they were both old soldiers who had fallen on evil days, and that, having many hungry mouths to feed, they had been forced to seek a maintenance in any fashion that came to hand.

Game laws in Austria are very strict, and when the Emperor had left them, after taking down their names and addresses, the two poor wretches spent more than one *mauvais quart d’heure* of quaking apprehension. Judge, therefore, what must have been their astonishment and joy when they found themselves appointed game-keepers on the very estate upon which they had been poaching. Investigation had proven their stories to be absolutely true, and so their need found relief and

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their excellent military record its reward in spite of the grievousness of their offence.

Another time, during a drive to Schönbrunn, finding a fire-engine which, while on the way to a great conflagration, had been stalled in a mud-hole broken out by a recent heavy rain, far from leaving the ponderous machine to be extricated by the efforts of the fast-gathering crowd, the Emperor had the horses taken from his carriage and added to the engine's team, while he himself jumped into a cab that chanced to pass and proceeded to his destination.

Pre-eminent as Francis-Joseph is as *Pater Patriæ*, and beloved as he is by high and low alike, he is equally pre-eminent as a Sovereign, a fact which makes the "Crown a lonely splendor" indeed.

Between the Imperial House and those of the aristocracy, no matter how old, wealthy, and powerful they may be, there is a great gulf fixed, which no intimacy or familiarity is allowed to bridge. The Emperor is always the Emperor, the father of his Nobles as he is of his lowest peasants, and there is none even second to him, so that, while he is simple and unaffected in his manner, and without the slightest touch of arrogance, he never mingles with them at any time in the social sense. The German Kaiser and the English King can choose their associates from among the Nobility of their dominions, but almost the only intimate friend not of his own blood Francis-Joseph has ever had was the late King of Saxony.

That spirit of *laissez-aller* which has, alas, long pervaded many of the reigning Houses of Europe, is not at all tolerated by Habsburg tradition; and I should be tempted to describe the majesty of Francis-Joseph as absolutely Olympian, in that it is so entirely above even the great aristocracy, and, indeed, in a sense, which is



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modified by his great approachability, quite apart from them also.

A story that is told of the Emperor Joseph II. is an excellent illustration of this. Joseph, a most laborious and conscientious Monarch, much concerned about the welfare of his people, presented to the city of Vienna, for use as a public park, a tract of land that had until then been part of the royal demesne. (It is now that queen of beautiful metropolitan breathing spaces, the Prater.) One of the greatest aristocrats of the Empire deprecatingly suggested that the Emperor might perhaps have been too liberal in his munificence, since he had gone far towards depriving himself of sufficient space wherein to enjoy the society of his Peers.

"Not at all," replied the Emperor; "for if I am to enjoy the society of my Peers only, I will have to spend my days in the vaults of the Kapuziner Kirche.<sup>1</sup>

This explains why Francis-Joseph is so very much alone, excepting for the society of his two daughters and their children. Already isolated by his position, it has been his misfortune to survive most of those who were of his day and generation. Wellnigh all the statesmen and generals who served him in council and in the field during the first three or four decades of his reign, and nearly all his contemporaries who were related to him by blood, are gone, while those men who were mere children when he had already been many years on the throne now fill the great offices of the State and assist him in the task of government.

Little has been left him of the happiness of life; but labor is the panacea for all its ills, and he absorbs himself in it, so as to allow no time for brooding thoughts

<sup>1</sup> Where the members of the Imperial Family are interred.



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or, indeed, even for relaxation of any kind, excepting occasional shooting and hunting expeditions.

It is difficult to give an idea of the enormous quantity of work he does accomplish.

He is obliged to be in touch with two distinct parliaments, the Hungarian and the Austrian; he has to consider and approve documents submitted to him by two cabinets, comprising no less than nineteen ministers, and to follow up, with each one of them, the transactions of their respective departments. He must direct the administration and exercise the chief command of the entire army of the Empire—nearly a million of men—see to the proper direction of two complete Imperial establishments, one at Vienna and another at Pesth, with their hundreds of dignitaries, officials, and retainers of every grade; he must watch with careful eye the doings of the various members composing the numerous Habsburg Family—doings which very often require close attention—nay, he even superintends the management of their private fortunes and properties; and, finally, takes the leading part in all ceremonies and State functions, not of one Court but of two.

Rising at daybreak from the little iron camp-bed that I have previously mentioned, he shaves himself, is assisted to dress by his valet, and proceeds to his coffee and rolls in the adjoining study. As soon as these are despatched, the work of the day begins, and he turns to good account the early hours that the majority of his subjects spend in sleep, although his aides-de-camp and *Flügel-Adjutants* are forced in turn, when on duty, to keep the same hours as himself. Indeed, greatly to the consternation of some high and mighty officials, he has of late years fallen in the habit of frequently giving audience to Ministers and Officers of State at seven o'clock in the morning! But, as a general rule, these first, fresh

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morning hours are usually devoted to the consideration of the despatches and reports that have been sent in from the various departments, and nothing is allowed to escape the Emperor's careful eye, as his endorsements and marginal annotations attest. Sometimes these are of the nature of drastic criticism, at others they display a humor for which one would not think "the hardest-worked man in the Empire" could find opportunity.

For instance, on the margin of one despatch, from an Austrian Ambassador abroad, were found the words, "very pompous and trivial," while another bore the remark, "Count X—— has signed this report, but seems to have been absent when it was written."

The Ruler of Austro-Hungary is one of the wealthiest Sovereigns of Europe, since, in addition to his civil list, he commands from his personal fortune an income which, even in these days of multifarious multi-millionaires, is of unusual magnitude; but what he allows himself for his own gratification is really ridiculously pathetic or pathetically ridiculous. The terms in this instance are interchangeable.

As often as improvements are suggested for his personal comfort at the Hofburg or elsewhere, he is always prepared with an excuse, or an explanation, to justify their being dispensed with, and, with vigorous protest, invariably attempts to extinguish the blaze of entreaty from his attendants into ashes of discouragement.

When electrical ventilating apparatus first came into use, and the model of one specially constructed for creating a draught through a fire-place during the summer months was shown to the Emperor, he declared himself delighted with it.

The Court was just on the point of leaving Vienna for Ischl, and through the open windows Francis-Joseph

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glanced at the fine old lindens, acacias, chestnuts, and clipped ilex, the parterres of brilliant flowers, the fountains which the hot sun-rays touched to pinks, blues, and greens, and numberless iridescent tints, while he seemed immersed in silent calculation. At last he turned to his first "*Leib-Kammerdiener*" (first valet)—a faithful servant, who simply worships his Imperial Master, and has been at his side for many long years.

"This is an excellent device—excellent! Pray order some to be at once adjusted in the apartments of the Empress and of Archduchess Marie-Valerie."

The disappointed attendant gazed with long-suffering eyes at his Master.

"And also in Your Majesty's rooms, of course?" he questioned, almost imploringly.

"Not at all! It is a useless toy for an old soldier like me."

"I feared as much, Majesty," the valet murmured, respectfully, but firmly. "Your Majesty will, I trust, reconsider this, for the rooms occupied by Your Majesty during the summer visits from Ischl are very warm and uncomfortable, as the sun pours in all the afternoon."

"I see," quoth the Emperor, with a mischievous smile, "you are going to try your persuasions once more upon your very trying and obstinate old Master."

The man looked with entreaty at the Emperor.

"I have often contradicted Your Majesty," he pleaded, "but only when it was for Your Majesty's good. I beg Your Majesty to forgive me, but these electric fans are necessary to Your Majesty's welfare in summer."

"You need not ask my forgiveness for a mere difference of opinion," replied the Emperor, who could hardly keep from laughing (to be honest, His Most Catholic Majesty's gravity of countenance was preserved only with the greatest difficulty); "your conscience is too

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sensitive, but you must not worry any more about the electric fans, because I am not going to spend hundreds of florins to keep myself a little cooler."

"Only a hundred apiece," whispered the "*Leib-Kammerdiener*," imploringly.

"Well"—the Emperor's eyes searched his valet's face for a second keenly—"I am not going to spend a hundred florins apiece for my chimneys. I am only here a few days at a time in summer, and, moreover"—as if with an afterthought—"the weather prophets say that we will have no great heat this year. Sufficient unto the day will be the evil thereof," he concluded, his blue eyes twinkling. "It is very selfish of you to be always thinking of my comfort; so go at once and order those fans for Her Majesty's apartments and for the Archduchess's."

The "*Kammerdiener*" did not move. Plainly he was unwilling to be dismissed without a loop-hole for escape in the direction of disobedience being left to him, a fact of which the Emperor was fully aware.

"I quite understand," he said, slightly raising his voice for his man's speedier conviction. "It's a part of your little game to stand there innocently until I change my mind. I'll thank you to remember that I am not yet in my dotage. So it's no use for you to stick to your guns in this obstinate fashion. Don't you know that ready concession is due from the young to the old?"

The gray-haired serving-man gazed wearily but resolutely at his master, who raised a forbidding hand, "I will listen to no more protestations, and, for the rest, you may count upon my forgiveness, but don't do it again," with which consoling conclusion the crestfallen "*Leib-Kammerdiener*" had to be satisfied.

A month or so later, however, when the Emperor, leaving the delicious freshness of the "*Kaiservilla*" at

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Ischl, where clematis and jessamine climb and twine about terrace and veranda, where roses in glorious profusion shed their petals on heavenly green lawns beneath the beneficent shadow of pine and fir, and the forest *Maiglöckchen* fill the air with their fairy fragrance, to take possession for a fortnight of his quarters at the Hofburg—undeniably hot and stuffy at such a season—he was surprised to find them exquisitely cool and pleasant. Gravely he walked to the fireplace and investigated it.

“Aha!” exclaimed he, pointing a threatening forefinger at the “*Kammerdiener*,” who was unpacking a dressing-case with an air of painfully absorbed attention. “Aha! so you have won your point, after all; passive endurance must become my forte if I wish to enjoy peace and quiet. But”—and he shook his head ominously—“I wish you would forego some of your more burdensome responsibilities. A man can’t avoid all of them, I know, but yours must be especially irksome—your exaggerated anxiety for my comfort, for instance. Believe me, forego this heaviest one, at least, since good intentions in this vale of tears bring no gratitude.”

The three valets who are nearest to the Emperor’s person are now Rudolph Rottner, bedroom valet, Raimund Zrunek, his assistant, and Eugene Ketterl, who is intrusted with the full care and charge of the military wardrobe, a huge room, panelled in light oak and lined with deep cupboards, which hold the multitudinous uniforms required by the Sovereign for various occasions, such as reviews, receptions, visits to and from foreign Royalties, etc.

The neatness of this curious place is marvellous. Not a grain of dust is to be seen on the highly polished tessellated floor, the two or three large tables where the



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garments are folded after being used, the tall oaken stands upon which they are aired before and after conveyance to the Emperor's dressing-room, and, of course, still less within the great clothes-presses, where each shelf, drawer, or compartment is provided with a card whereon is beautifully engrossed the nature of the contents. These include, besides military garb belonging to all branches of the Austrian service, that of an English and a Prussian Field-Marshal, of a Swedish General, and uniforms of no less than ten foreign regiments of which he is honorary Colonel—namely, the English Dragoon Guards, Fifth Portuguese Infantry, Russian Thirty-fifth Dragoons of Bielgorod, Russian Kexholm Guard, Prussian Kaiser-Franz Grenadiers of the Guard, Prussian Emperor Francis-Joseph Hussars, First Saxon Lancers, Sixth Roumanian Artillery, Fourth Wurtemberg Infantry, and Thirteenth Bavarian Infantry, etc., etc., etc!

Another important personage of the immediate Household is the first "*Zimmeraufseher*"—literally translated, first room-superintendent—Joseph Traxler, whose portly presence, huge bunch of keys, imposing demeanor, and dignified mien are quite as much features of the Hofburg as are its unique tapestries and magnificent frescoes.

There is yet another far humbler and much less state-ly individual there also, for whom Francis-Joseph has a quite special regard, and this is His Majesty's own personal "*Holzträger*" (wood carrier), Franz Meidl. Familiarly known to the entire personnel of the Hofburg as "Meiderl," this excellent man is a character, in his quiet, unobtrusive fashion. Always cheerful, smiling, obliging, he may often be seen hurrying silently through all the superb glitter, the perfumes, the lavish luxuriousness of the Imperial Palace, his wooden hod, filled with olive and cedar logs, balanced on his shoulder,



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and his great, square basket of pine-cones and tiny bundles of carefully packed dry heather hanging from his arm, for upon *him* repose the responsibilities of keeping up crackling fires on the hearths of the private apartments throughout the winter.

"Meiderl" to the community, the old man is often called by the irreverent pages-in-waiting and young officers of the guard the "Vestal," thanks to the almost devotional fashion in which he accomplishes his office. Softly he sinks upon his knees before the altar—I mean the fireplace—arranges the diminutive heather fagots and pine-cones with scrupulous exactitude, tops the edifice with severely cleaned and selected logs, sets a light to it reverently, blows little flames into greater ones with his breath as noiselessly as possible (for he despises bellows, which he judges to be both vulgar and disrespectfully squeaky), and remains kneeling until there is not the slightest danger of the blaze going out.

His calling to him is of an almost sacerdotal nature; it is his purpose in life, his greatest joy, and he goes on with his work from October to May, healthy in mind and body, a hale and hearty old man, with white whiskers, a humorous mouth, a large, well-shaped, ambitious nose, and a delightful sense of being one of the most necessary rivets in the great Imperial engine.

As I have already said, the Emperor greatly likes this old fellow in the neat blue linen garments, who years and years ago served at his side on many battle-fields, and he never misses a chance of joking him about the fact that to-day, as then, he is dauntless under fire. Anybody seeing the "*Kaiserlich-Königlicher Hof-Holzträger*"—which means, literally, the "Imperial and Royal Court Wood Carrier"—look at his beloved master and erstwhile *generalissimo* on one of these occasions, his brown, wrinkled countenance suddenly lit up with

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pleasure, becomes at once aware that even this man of humble calling has it in his power to let in floods of light upon the passionate loyalty and affection with which Francis-Joseph inspires high and low in his vast Household and vaster dominions.

Whenever the Emperor re-enters the Hofburg, after an absence of more or less duration, he makes a point of greeting all those old servants who have been so long near him, with a certain whimsical and very amusing assumption of surprise at finding them still at their respective posts.

"So we meet again, old friend!" he usually says in his crisp tones, raising his eyebrows slightly with droll astonishment and with a mischievous flicker in his wonderfully youthful eyes as he appears to ponder. "Let me see—is it twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years since we first became acquainted? I trust you are doing fairly well, but you had best be on your guard, none the less, else you will soon be as old as I am!" and then he passes on, while the favored recipient of this mark of Imperial regard, be it a he or a she, remains quite a full minute gazing after him with adoring eyes and a smile that verges perilously upon the tearful side of joy.

How he manages it I am lamentably unable to explain, but it is a solemn fact that the names and faces of his immense retinue of old servants are known to him as if they belonged to his family. Stadler, the head cellarer; Bernhardt, the French head-chef; Franz Effenberger, the famous Viennese confectioner; the imposing and superb Joseph Schlögel, who watches at the outer palace door leading to the Sovereign's private apartments, gorgeous in the glory of his gold-edged livery, broad baldric supporting a sword of office, plumed cocked hat, long "*baton*" (surmounted by a crown and orb, upon which rests a double-headed eagle of gold),

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knee-breeches and silken hose revealing the finest pair of calves in Vienna—and all the other old palace-employees, whether they belong to one or the other department of the *Maison de l'Empereur*, can truthfully boast of being personally known, liked, and individually appreciated by their kindly, large-hearted master.

In his present loneliness the Emperor finds no greater consolation than to withdraw to the three rooms which are most peculiarly his own, his bedroom, his study, and a little "salon," all opening into each other, and where it is understood that he is to remain completely undisturbed and unmolested.

None know better than he how exceeding great is the impatience for solitude of the bereaved, and with what febrile vehemence the smitten heart longs for peace and silence, nor to what improbable lengths hours and minutes can stretch themselves for those condemned to be deprived of such boons.

This suite of apartments is furnished with almost disconcerting simplicity. There is nothing Imperial in the long, narrow, sleeping chamber, where the plain, serviceable chairs and tables, and the small, iron camp-bed seem almost to apologize for their humble appearance. The walls are, however, absolutely covered with portraits in oil and water colors, photographs, and quaint, touching little souvenirs of those he loves and has loved. Here hang a dozen pictures, at least, of the Empress, taken at various periods of her life, also a score or more representing the late Crown-Prince, Archduchess Gisela, Archduchess Marie-Valerie, and her numerous babies, etc. Scattered among them are some primitive sketches due to the first artistic efforts of his children and grandchildren, also, carefully preserved under glass, several old-fashioned "samplers," embroidered fifty years ago by "the little Rose of Possenhofen," and a bouquet of

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pressed mountain blossoms gathered for him by her little hand during the first days of her engagement to him, at which he gazes, hungry-eyed, striving to pierce the mists of the past, and to remember every small incident, every insignificant detail, of that happy, hopeful time.

Beside the bed a velvet *prie-dieu*, embroidered by Elizabeth with pale pansies and lilies, supports, on its high, carved arm-rest, a Book of Hours, from which depend the delicately painted ends of a broad, satin ribbon marker, executed by Archduchess Sophia, while above it, fastened to the wall, is a curious little crucifix fashioned of rough wood by the infant hand of "Rudi" at the instigation and with the help of his grandfather, Archduke Franz-Karl.

Life for those who have left hope behind them, take it as you will, is just an incubus, and language fails one to convey any notion of how heavily it weighs on the shoulders of Francis-Joseph. Such sorrows as his merely glance away from the young and reserve their serious ravages for the old, to whom Nepenthe is impossible, and who, in their helpless pain, dumbly cry to fate, "Why have you done these things to me?"

The Emperor's study is somewhat more luxurious than the bedroom. At any rate, it is vast and lofty; also, it is rather sombre. The walls are hung with dark and darker amaranth tapestry, in vertical stripes, "*ton sur ton*," and there is a thick, dark-red carpet upon the floor. Immediately against the great, square desk stands, on a ponderous easel, and massively framed in pale gold, the celebrated portrait of Empress Elizabeth by Winterhalter. Deep arm-chairs, upholstered in amaranth brocade, a few tables, cabinets, and bookcases, and two or three fine paintings, among which is a superb "Crucifixion," complete the unostentatious ar-

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rangement of this room, where so many important documents are signed daily, and where Francis-Joseph is so often found, already at work, before sunrise. One of the tall windows opening upon a balcony is that which he throws open, whenever the weather permits, in order to listen for a few minutes to the music played by the "*Hofkapelle*" (Imperial band) in the wide, stone-paved court-yard of the Hofburg below.

It is astonishing what men will prize, what men will treasure! Emperor Francis-Joseph, for example, prizes and treasures above all his magnificent art collections—ay, above the very Regalia which has descended to him in its glittering splendor through a long course of centuries, a couple of drawerfuls of short letters, in a cabinet hard by, written in a rather large, not remarkably legible hand, by his only son, and a couple more drawerfuls penned on pale-gray paper, on the left-hand upper corner of which a tiny Imperial crown is embossed in silver, curiously interlaced with the initial "E." From these last-mentioned there is still to be detected just a trace, just the faintest reminder of the delicate perfume—vague, elusive, and exquisitely personal and intimate—with which everything Empress Elizabeth wore or touched has remained impregnated.

How many times has the lonely old man read and reread those closely penned, satiny sheets, think you? How many times, since the days when all hope of sunshine went out of his life for good and aye, when his mental atmosphere became sluggish and suffocating, as if it had yielded up its vital principle, and the sable cloud of an unfathomable grief spread with awful rapidity over his heaven.

It may not be quite right, quite fair, to reveal in print such little secrets, but biographers are the most unprincipled of people, I fear, *ils prennent leur bien où ils*



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*le trouvent*, nor do they deem that it is right to carry delicacy too far, for some biographies are certain to be heart-rending even if they be written with the most praiseworthy and unequalled discretion.

Nor is it a very great crime, after all, to picture things and feelings which are the constant companions, the witnesses of such a man's life—phases of himself which have remained hidden hitherto—and which should now be told because they not only are rich in precious revelations of a character extraordinarily fine, but because they express him in an aspect which would otherwise never become known outside of his immediate family circle, an aspect hitherto quite concealed by the conventional barriers stretched between a personage of his lofty rank and the rest of the world.

And though I am at times possessed by a sense of what I cannot but call the liberty I am taking in embodying my knowledge of him in a published book, for all who read to carp at, yet, on the other hand, it seems that the real wrong would be to withhold that great, strange chapter of his private life, which shows how wrongly and unfairly he has often been judged.

A family man *par excellence*, Francis-Joseph fairly worships Archduchess Marie-Valerie's children, and also his bonnie young Heir Presumptive, the eldest son of that remarkably handsome man, Archduke Otto, and of the charming Archduchess Maria-Josepha, who now holds the position of "First Lady in the Land."

Young Karl-Franz is growing tall and slender as a young fir-tree; he has his father's magnificent eyes, his mother's sweetness of expression, and is very manly and well developed for his sixteen years. He rides extremely well, and, generally speaking, flatters the *amour propre* of his Imperial great-uncle, who likes well, indeed, the boldness and ardor the lad displays in all physical



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exercises. The uttermost he wishes for him is that he should grow up a frank, brave, honest man, so as to become in time a good Monarch; and meanwhile the boy is happy, full of fun and merry pranks, devoted to his gentle mother, whom he treats with unconscious but touching chivalry, proud of his dashing, splendid-looking father, and seeing in the Emperor himself the embodiment of all human perfection.

The clamor, the disputes, the wrong-doings of the world are as yet closed letters to him, and he cares but little for his own fate or his own future, great and glorious though it is likely to be, for the children of his uncle, Archduke Francis-Ferdinand, the present heir to the Dual Crown, and of Countess Sophia Chotek, now Princess von Hohenberg, his morganatic wife, are excluded from all rights of succession to the Throne.

Few possess the gift of arousing and of retaining affection and loyalty to the same degree as does the Emperor. As I let my pen run swiftly on to the names of some of those who have most deeply felt this power and have acknowledged it with a life-long devotion, I assume no rose-colored spectacles, but write what really is, with the aid of no illusive glamour.

His oldest companion and comrade was the late Count Taaffe, an Austrian, who was also an Irish peer, and of whom I have already made mention on two or three occasions. When he died the Emperor bitterly lamented this to himself wellnigh irreparable loss, for the Count was not only the associate of youthful days, but also the trusty counsellor of later years, a faithful, honest man, gaunt of figure, and with a face plain, indeed, but prepossessing by its frank candor, its constant good-humor and expression of keen, alert, indomitable cleverness. He certainly was an adept in the difficult art of dealing with the turbulent Austrian Diet, and of bending it to what he

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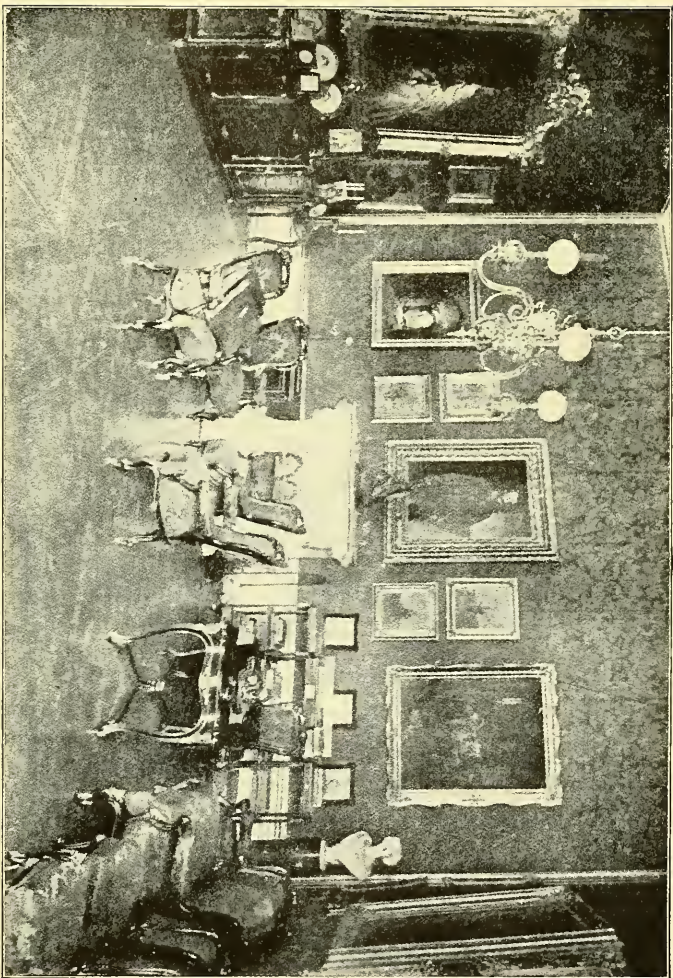
knew to be the policy of the Emperor, whose wishes alone he consulted and endeavored to fulfil. He was also one of the most peculiar looking men in Vienna. Aquiline features, a long, narrow head, black hair, worn rather long, falling to the collar of a strangely cut, old gray frock-coat, which he invariably wore, and an odd-looking high silk hat, perched on the back of his head, made up a *tout ensemble* which was a perfect gold-mine to the Viennese caricaturists, who were never tired of portraying him, as well as his old coachman, who was almost as well-known a character at the Austrian capital as the Count himself.

This worthy Jehu, who ordered around his illustrious master in the most amusing fashion, had been in his service for many years. He trimmed his hair in the same peculiar manner as the Count, wore the same kind of "tile," perched on the very back of his head, and when not in livery was usually arrayed in one of Taaffe's old gray frock-coats. Indeed, the resemblance between master and man was so striking as to be positively ludicrous, and constituted one of the stock jokes of the Viennese comic papers.

Another member of the then Prime-Minister's household, who was scarcely less well known than his famous coachman, was his dog, "Moppi," the most remarkable poodle in the Empire, and certainly more popular than Prince Bismarck's Reichshund.

"Moppi" was for many years the constant and inseparable companion of the Count, and was probably acquainted with more State secrets than any other dog in Europe, for he used to sit solemnly on a chair in a corner of the Prime-Minister's room at the palace, where the Cabinet Councils were held and audiences were received, with a look of truly statesman-like sagacity on his clever and intelligent face.

Unfortunately, "Moppi's" official decorum and unim-



THE EMPEROR'S PRIVATE SALON IN THE HOFBURG



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peachable conduct in official matters did not extend to his private life, which was characterized by numerous indiscretions, and as soon as night set in this light-hearted canine was wont to cast aside the cares of office and become one of the gayest dogs in Vienna.

It was during one of these midnight excursions that he was mauled and torn by rival Don Juans and received fatal injuries, to which he succumbed, although tenderly nursed by the Prime-Minister of Austria and by the Countess, his wife, one of the greatest ladies of the Empire.

"Moppi" lies buried in one of the prettiest corners of the park surrounding the Count's beautiful country seat at Ellisch, and the tombstone that marks his grave bears the following inscription: "'Moppi,' the favorite of all," and was always surrounded by a beautiful bed of flowers.

The late Count Julius Andrassy, too, was an invaluable man to the Emperor, who used to pat him on the shoulder and exclaim appreciatingly, in allusion to the Count's fighting on the side of the Hungarian rebels, which necessitated his escaping from the country to save his neck: "How glad I am that I did not hang you in '49!"

He was not only an extraordinarily able statesman, but simply and intrinsically a great man. Rather tall, very slender, and endowed with one of those physiognomies so lively and so expressive of wit that the absence of what is generally called good looks is not regretted or even observed, he was a privileged person at Court, brusque, sometimes *sans facon* also, but so overflowing with true *esprit* that his mere entrance into a room seemed to banish care and weariness.

Such was Julius Andrassy—plucky, dashing, always



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"on deck," never jaded, never bored, but ever looking as if life were the pleasantest comedy that could be played, and as if sorrow and anxiety could not withstand his caustic humor and wonderful talent for seeing the pleasantest side of things, whatever came to pass.

But let me proceed from the dead to the living, to some of those gray-haired men who are still at their posts, and whose whole devotion to the Emperor, far from diminishing with time, has increased with every passing year.

General-of-Cavalry Count Paar, who is the Emperor's principal aide-de-camp, as well as the chief of his Military Household, and who is more constantly at his side than any other member of his suite, is perhaps the one person who enjoys to a greater degree than any one else the confidence of his Imperial Master.

Tall, with an air of extreme distinction and an expression at once slightly melancholy and a trifle cynical, he bears himself somewhat listlessly and indolently *à la surface*, but his handsome eyes can flash glances which search the inmost soul of others, and his absolute sincerity of character and of utterance is known to the whole country. His impassive calm, his punctilious courtesy, and his unalterable serenity are proverbial, as is also his keen knowledge of the world and of social and Court etiquette. The life of incessant activity and change to which he is subjected is never permitted to ruffle his temper in the slightest. The busy months that he spends with the Emperor at Vienna, the continual changes from Schönbrunn to Gödöllő, Ischl, Prague, or Ebensee, according to the duty or necessity of the moment, the visits to foreign Courts, the fatiguing weeks spent in attending the great autumnal or spring manœuvres, the everlasting succession of *fêtes* in which he is forced to take part, do not shake his imperturbability in the least, and this in itself makes him

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indispensable. Everywhere his tall, commanding figure and finely modelled face are to be seen at the Emperor's shoulder, while his knack of saying things gracefully, and his total lack of hypocrisy, give all those who come in contact with him a sense of *bien être* and of confidence. Nor is what I say of him conventional compliment; it is the genuine expression of a very universal opinion, to which I am glad to add the tribute of an old and sincere personal regard.

Prince Rudolph Lichtenstein, the present Grand-Master-of-the-Court, is also a great favorite with the Emperor and an exceedingly handsome man, *ce qui ne gâte rien*. Gallant, courageous, and generous, he was the principal cavalier of the late Empress, and was intrusted with the mission of accompanying her to England and Ireland when she went there to hunt. His attachment to Francis-Joseph, who holds him in the highest esteem, is deep and unswerving.

Prince Hugo Dietrichstein, one of the Emperor's favorite aides-de-camp, is a tall, graceful officer, remarkable for the most winning smile and the courtliest bow to be found throughout the Empire. He is also extremely well favored, and, like most Austrian aristocrats, excellently versed in all sports.

I perceive that if I indulge myself in any more descriptions of the Emperor's *entourage* I will be carried far further than I intend, space being now, at the last, a matter of some importance; but I cannot close this little gallery of pen-portraits without a passing mention of F. M. L. Baron von Beck, now Chief-of-Staff, and one of the finest soldiers in Austria. He carries his grizzled head with that air which almost invariably bespeaks authority, and looks out over the Imperial armies from his great height as over a fine standing crop, the grain of which he can, at a sign, gather within the

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hollow of his hand and distribute where it is most needed.

This notable man has friends everywhere, and few enough enemies to have given rise to the report that he has none—though that would be but a poor and untruthful compliment to pay to one of such worth as he.

To his credit, also, be it noted that he is one of those military leaders who, possessed of a slow tongue and a quick brain—than which there are few better equipments for a soldier—has won the affection of all those who serve or have served under his orders.

Among those belonging to his family, and upon whom the love and affection of the Emperor is more particularly centered, is his granddaughter, Archduchess Elizabeth, "*Erzsi*," as she is familiarly called, the only child of his deeply mourned son, "*Rudi*," and who was brought up under his personal care and supervision. Indeed, the Emperor managed to find time even to direct her studies and to devise her pleasures, and manifested so great a jealousy of the trust confided to him by his boy in the matter that he would not allow the child's mother to take her anywhere out of his dominions, nor yet to have any voice in the selection of little "*Erzsi's*" Household.

Moreover, when the seventeen-year-old girl lost her heart to a young cavalry officer, Prince Otto Windisch-Graetz, the Emperor, after a violent struggle with his ambition for her, rather than stand in the way of her happiness, authorized her to make the marriage she desired, and richly dowered her, although the bridegroom, far from being of Imperial or Royal rank, did not even belong to the Mediatized Families of Europe, but merely to one of the great Houses of the Austrian Nobility.

The young Archduchess is, I hear, exceedingly happy in her married life; and the union has also been fortunate

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in a political sense, as it has put an end, once and for all time, to those projects of the Separatists, or other trouble-makers in Hungary's Parliament, who put her forward as their candidate for the Throne of Hungary on the death of the grandfather, to whom she is so passionately devoted.

Her wedding was, as customary in the case of that of every Princess of the Imperial House of Habsburg, preceded by what is known at Vienna as the Act of Renunciation.

So much misconception exists, not only abroad, but even in Austria, with regard to this ceremony of renunciation that it may be just as well to explain what it really means.

Placing her hand upon the Gospels, and in the presence of the Emperor, of the members of the Imperial Family, and of the principal dignitaries of the Realm, the bride-elect takes a vow to renounce all claim to the precedence, rank, and rights to the Throne, which may have been hers by birth, in order to share those of her husband. And as Prince Otto Windisch-Graetz did not belong to the Imperial Family, is a mere Noble, and can never, even by the most remote possibility, be called upon to succeed to the Crowns of Austro-Hungary, Archduchess Elizabeth virtually renounced every prospect to a Throne which she had until then possessed.

The succession to the Throne in Austro-Hungary is governed partly by the Pragmatic Sanction and partly by those "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg, the tenor of which *cannot be disclosed*, those personages not belonging to the reigning family who are acquainted therewith, such as the Minister of the Imperial Household, being bound, by the most solemn and iron-clad oath, not to reveal their tenor or their range.

The Pragmatic Sanction itself is, of course, no secret.

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It was promulgated as far back as the reign of Emperor Charles VI. of Germany, the last descendent in the male line direct of the House of Habsburg, and consists of a treaty or agreement between the Austrian and Hungarian moieties of his dominions, providing not only for their perpetual union but likewise for the succession to the Magyar Crown. Until that time the Hungarian succession had been governed by the laws of primogeniture, women as well as men being capable of inheriting the Crown.

Charles knew that, according to this provision, his daughter, Maria-Theresia, would, in default of male issue, immediately become Queen of Hungary upon his death. He apprehended, however, that obstacles would be raised to her becoming Empress of Germany, that is to say, Ruler of the Austrian and German portions of his dominions, and so caused it to be stipulated in the Pragmatic Sanction that Austria and Hungary should always be united and always ruled by one and the same Sovereign.

On his death, his daughter, Maria-Theresia, became immediately Queen Regnant of Hungary, and on the strength of this Pragmatic Sanction laid immediate claim to the Imperial Throne of Germany, a pretension which was denied by a number of German Sovereigns, including Frederick the Great of Prussia and the Elector of Bavaria. Indeed, it was not until after many sanguinary wars that she ultimately secured a species of compromise, by means of which her husband, Duke Charles of Lorraine, was elected and recognized as Emperor of Germany.

Kossuth and the Separatists in Austria deny the existence of this Pragmatic Sanction, declare that no copy of it can be found in the State Archives at Pesth, and even go so far as to insist that if there is really such a document in existence the Hungarian signatures there-





A FUTURE EMPEROR. ARCHDUKE KARL-FRANZ,  
SON OF THE HEIR-PRESUMPTIVE,  
ARCHDUKE OTTO



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to are forgeries. Were there any foundation to this preposterous assertion, which, I regret to state, is credited by many of their adherents, Archduchess Elizabeth would, save for her act of renunciation, have become entitled to the Crown of Hungary on her grandfather's death, whereas the Throne of Austria, from which women were barred by the Salic law, would have gone to the present Heir Apparent, Archduke Francis-Ferdinand.

Every now and again the question of these mysterious "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg crops up in the national legislatures at Vienna and Buda-Pesth, in spite of all the endeavors of the presiding officers and the ministers present to prevent any discussion thereof.

The last time this occurred it was in connection with the solemn act of renunciation by the Heir Apparent, Archduke Francis-Ferdinand, of all rights of succession to the Throne of Austro-Hungary for the children born of his morganatic marriage with Countess Sophie Chotek.

On that occasion the Hungarian Ministers, in claiming for the Archduke the right to renounce, in the name of any children that he might have, their succession to the Crown, declared that his act of renunciation was in conformity with the "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg. Thereupon several members of the Opposition protested that, in as much as the "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg did not figure in the national code of the Kingdom of Hungary, and had never been sanctioned by either of the houses of the national legislature at Buda-Pesth, which were, indeed, wholly ignorant of their character, they could not be regarded as bearing upon the situation, or as exempting Francis-Ferdinand from that provision of the Magyar code which precludes parents from renouncing in the name of their

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children, born or unborn, rights, prerogatives, or possessions to which their offspring would become entitled.

No vote was taken about the matter, the discussion was allowed to drop, and it is not probable that it will be revived, for the animosity in Hungary towards the Czechs is so intensely bitter that not even the most rabid of Magyar Separatists would venture to put forward as a candidate for the throne of St. Stephen any child of Countess Chotek, who is a Czech.

The secrecy and likewise the rigor of these "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg have something in common with those laws that govern secret societies in the United States and in the Orient. It has been by virtue of their provisions that the Emperor has deprived his kinsmen, the Archdukes John and Leopold-Salvator, of their Imperial titles and prerogatives, reducing them from the status of Princes of the Blood to that of mere commoners, the one as John Orth, and the other as Leopold Wölfling. While the causes which led the Emperor to take this action with regard to Archduke Leopold are of recent and very universal knowledge, no one even at the Court of Austria knows definitely the exact reasons which led to this measure in the instance of Archduke John, who, although one of the most brilliant members of the Imperial Family, was suddenly expelled, not only from that family, but also from the Empire, as well as commanded to take a plebeian name and to disappear.

Princesses, too, have experienced the severity of these "Family Statutes" of the House of Habsburg, the case of the ex-Crown Princess of Saxony, who has been temporarily deprived by the Emperor of the status, rank, and prerogatives of an Archduchess, which she inherited at her birth, being, doubtless, fresh in the memory of all.

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Austrians are, without the possibility of a doubt, the best riders and finest sportsmen in the world, and Francis-Joseph is one of the most perfect horsemen and sportsmen of his Empire.

I saw him once, at the finish of an extraordinarily swift run with the hounds, come scatheless through a misadventure which would have proved fatal to ninety-nine and a half out of a hundred.

His left stirrup-leather gave way and broke, and, at the pace we were going, few, indeed, would have escaped being hurled out of the saddle, but he scarcely swerved, and, hardly checking his horse to recover his equilibrium, went on as if nothing had happened, his knees pressed a bit closer into his hunter's flanks, thundering along, half-stirrupless, with the utmost unconcern.

Nothing rebuts him in sport, and I have often admired his exemplary patience as I watched him plodding conscientiously after a sly old dog fox (that led the pack a tedious wind in and out, through an interminable spinney, and dodged about till twilight and rain fell upon us in exasperating unison), smiling as good-humoredly as if we were having one of the glorious hours of cross-country racing, over fence and fallow, in a delicious clipping rush, without a check from find to finish.

He is careless of hail or rain, mire or slush, mist or cold, snow, darkness, or frost, so long as there is a fine, scenting wind, for there is not a man, I believe, who loves hunting as he does, and yet no rider was ever gentler and kinder to his horses than this ardent sportsman who is so dashing and fiery in the field.

The Imperial stables, now under the supervision of Count Kinsky, husband of Archduchess Marie Valérie's girlhood friend, Princess Aglæe Auersperg, are superb. There the horses are quartered *en princes*, their blankets, hoods, and quarter-pieces marked with the Imperial



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crown and cipher, and their names blazoned in gold above their daintily nickelled manes, a joy forever to see the splendid animals, beneath their shining, satiny skins, with their small, lean heads, their delicate, nervously twitching, taper ears, their clean, slender, dainty legs, turning their velvety eyes lovingly towards the tall figure of the Emperor as soon as his step sounds upon the marble aisle dividing the luxurious loose-boxes.

Also, Francis-Joseph is immensely fond of a good tramp through wood, stubble, and furrow, a gun thrown within the crook of his arm, and looking keenly about him for partridge, rabbit, quail, or pheasant, but he dislikes *battues*, which, like all true and loyal disciples of Nimrod, he considers mere butchery, only consenting to attend them when a foreign Sovereign visits him, and such a display is *de rigueur*, though he denounces it as "the prose of shooting," and that with sincere disgust.

He is a great votary of both flat and steeple-chase racing, and makes a point of being present at the Freudenau spring and autumn meetings, especially when "gentlemen riders" or officers are in the saddle, and he is so excellent a judge of such matters that the mere turn of the foot in a stirrup tells him the exact amount of science possessed by a jockey, whether professional or otherwise.

His eyes still shine with enthusiasm when the saddling-bell sounds, when the ring is in its full rush of excitement, and the great brotherhood of the turf crowds together to see the start, and follows the favorites, with cheers and groans, as the case may be, over the stiff fences, the terrible blackthorn hedges, the double post-and-rails, and the artificial wall and bullfinches, for which the Freudenau course is celebrated, and which treat many to a *purler*; and although he would be

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satisfied, perchance, to see the obstacles tamed down a little for others, it is certain, too, that for himself he would absolutely refuse to let them be touched, had he, as he calls it, the luck of running steeple-chases. Everybody rejoices to see him there, and affectionate glances follow his tall form as he moves to his place in the Imperial tribune, which centres the grand-stand, at the very minute when the bell clangs and clashes passionately, and the names of the horses are hoisted on the telegraph board.

Many of those present think, too, of the slender, lovely Empress who used almost always to accompany him on such occasions, looking like a white camellia in her plain, sombre, tailor-made costume, smiling, radiant, and full of racing interest, as became the best horsewoman in Europe, while watching the desperate, neck-breaking efforts of the steeple-chasers with her deep, luminous, enthusiastic eyes, as the queens in olden days watched the fierce tournaments of the lists.

The best shot, the best horseman, and the keenest hunter of his Empire, Francis-Joseph, although past his seventieth year, still braves the white fall of those slow, softly descending Alpine snow-feathers which the chamois use as a veil of preservation, and exposes himself, quite undaunted, to the dense fogs of autumn and to the sudden plunge into frost which a mountaineer, such as he, is well aware that he will encounter on the spurs of the high ranges.

He knows his way, inch by inch, along those dangerous passes, and at night is quite content to find a bed of hay, a fire of pine branches, a meal of bread and cheese, and a rough shelter in one of the huts of refuge, erected by his orders and by those of the Empress, in places where there is barely a precarious foothold around the tiny wooden buildings.

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His well-knit frame resists the influence of the cruel air that can slay as surely as can a knife, and the cold that makes the body numb and the veins swell painfully, almost as well now as it did twenty-five years ago; and, gripping his "Alpenstock" in one hand and his rifle in the other, he climbs, stoutly and fearlessly, clad in the Jäger's plain, serviceable gray-and-green "Joppe" and breeches that leave the knee bare—rejoicing to be still able to match his strength and shrewd mountaineer's wisdom against the perilous bastions, walls, and peaks of his dear old friends, the Tyrolese, Upper Austrian, and Styrian Alps.

The shooting-box of Mürzsteg, built by himself in one of the loveliest spots in the Styrian Alps, is, perchance, dearer to his heart than any of the gorgeous Imperial residences which have been his since his eighteenth year. The forests that surround Mürzsteg are magnificent. The great trees rise from a wilderness of fragrant undergrowth and mountain-flowers, through which indescribably charming little by-paths seem to feel their way, winding cautiously this way and that, now emerging suddenly into the full sunlight of some open glade, and now plunging back again into the rich, sweet depth of shadow and the gloom of densely interlacing boughs, where the silence is alone disturbed by the full, fresh sound of running waters, the scamper of a hare, or the feathery whir of brightly tinted wings. Close by rushes the Mürz River, eternally white with foam, and through the branches of the veteran timber the lofty peaks of the "Hohe-Veitsch," the "Hocheck," and the "Kreuzwand" shine like jewels, whether they are crowned with dazzling summer lightning or powdered with fast-advancing autumn snows.

The whole region round about, both the forest-lands and the broad, intervening stretches of rosy heather and

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golden broom, is alive with birds and woodland creatures, and so surprisingly rich in game, including black-cock, mountain-cock, chamois, and deer, that it is a veritable paradise for sportsmen. Yet the arrival of large hunting parties seems almost a profanation of this quaint and delightful retreat, with its ice-blue waters and encircling mountains, so full of peace and solemn grandeur.

The interior of the house is extremely artistic, especially in the sense that it is that of a hunting-box and nothing else, thanks to the Emperor's taste and keen sense of the fitness of things. The floors and walls are of light and dark wood, and are ornamented in several instances with exquisite *marqueterie* work in designs of ferns, pine cones, and branches, oak leaves, and other forest treasures. The hall, which has a southern exposure, is decorated from floor to ceiling with hunting trophies. From a *rosace* in the centre depends a huge vulture shot some years ago by the Emperor; before one of the windows a wild-cat, almost as big as a puma—a victim to Crown-Prince Rudolf's rifle a short time before his death—stands in a menacing attitude, clawing at a rough tree-trunk, and above the carved, wooden mantel-piece a score of beautifully mounted chamois' heads are grouped about that of an unusually splendid "stag of ten."

On the ground floor, beside the hall, the dining, smoking, and billiard rooms, are eight bedrooms for the Emperor's suite. Immediately above are the apartments of the Emperor himself, those of his guests, and also those once used by the Empress and by "Rudi," which are still kept exactly as they were during the lifetime of the occupants. All the furniture, both in the guest-rooms and the Imperial suites, is made of a light, dainty, American juniper, and everywhere are to be admired the ex-

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quisite wood-carvings of the gifted sculptor, Franz Wagner.

As is always the case, the Emperor's rooms are the simplest of all; so much so, indeed, that when the German Kaiser last came to visit him at Mürzsteg Francis-Joseph, who had made a point of vacating them for him, said to his confidential valet, with a little apologetic smile:

"You had better go down-stairs and bring up a few things to make the place a little more Imperial!"

Above his bed hang twin, carved frames, the one containing the following charming little poem, written by Archduchess Marie Valérie, at the age of fourteen, to celebrate her mother's birthday, which falls on Christmas Eve. The figure of an angel standing on a cloud and holding a newly born baby adorns the upper corner of the manuscript, while below the signature is a remarkably good little sketch of Schloss Possenhofen, all furred with Christmas snow.

Weihnacht wieder! Hart gefroren  
Liegt der stille See,  
Und im Sonnenscheine glitzert  
Rings der frische Schnee.

In dem lieblich trauten Schlosse  
Das am Ufer steht  
Heut' ein Hauch von süsser Freude  
Durch die Herzen weht.

Denn ein Engel stieg vom Himmel  
Leise in der Nacht  
Hat als schönste Weihnachts' gabe  
Töchterlein gebracht.

Und die Jahre fliegen leise  
Aber rasch dahin  
Und die Eltern sehn mit Freude  
Sie zur Jungfrau blühn



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Drüben herrscht ein junger Kaiser  
In dem Nachbarland  
Als er's Mägdlein kennen lernte  
Freit' er ihre Hand

Und nun gehen sie durch's Leben  
Liebend seit an seit  
S'Mägdlein bleibt Ihrem Manne  
Treu in Freud' und Leid.

Und wenn auf des Kaiser's Haupte  
Manchmal drückt die Kron'  
Ist für seine Muh'n und Sorgen  
Sie der schönste Lohn!

VALÉRIE.

Weihnachten, 1882.

The other frame contains an exquisite water-color sketch of Empress Elizabeth as she appeared at a Court ceremony for the first and only time after Crown-Prince Rudolph's tragic death. None who saw her on that evening will ever forget the impression her entrance created, and I can do no better than to quote what a friend wrote to me about it at the time:

"The Redouten Saal was transformed into a veritable bower of flowers, among which softly gleamed the mellowness of thousands of wax candles, and total silence reigned until the doors were flung open to admit the Imperial party. Leaning on His Majesty's arm, Elizabeth looked like a very incarnation of sorrow, but sorrow in its most beautiful and strikingly poetical aspect, so that one forgot, while gazing at her, the living, pulsating, tortured, broken heart, and saw only the touching sweetness, the pensive mournfulness of her lovely presence. Clad, naturally, in deepest black and with a long, sable-hued gossamer veil falling from a pointed jet diadem to the very edge of her immense *Manteau de Cour*, she smiled faintly now and again as she slowly advanced between

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the double hedge of her bowing and curtsying guests, and I assure you that the expression of her perfect features, of her glorious eyes, was at once so startlingly poignant and so inexpressibly beautiful that many of those present were almost in tears, and found it difficult to conceal their emotion. Evidently she herself was wondering why her life was henceforth to be like this pageant, costly, empty, and brilliant, and what she had done to deserve such a fate.

"Her very silence, the defect we all usually found in her, suited her extraordinary charm that night, for she seemed to embody the stillness, the mystery, the ethereality of *la femme faite Ange de Douleur, et Reine de tous les cœurs*, and as she inclined her small head, crowned with its wealth of tawny braids, towards the groups that bent before her, the careless, the frivolous, the happy, the old and the young were alike smitten by a sudden pain, a bitter regret, a sort of vague anguish."

The artist to whom is due this amazing aquarelle of Elizabeth is a distinguished amateur, who painted it from memory the day after witnessing the scene described above, with no other aid than that of some photographs of an earlier date; and yet it is without question the finest and most sympathetic portrait ever made of her. The Emperor caused several copies of it to be made, but the original, as I have said already, hangs above his plain, narrow little bed at Mürzsteg, and he sits often far into the night gazing sorrowfully at it, after long hours passed in the splendid mountain and forest haunts which they had loved to visit together, in the beautiful Alpine autumn of the high ranges.

And now I will leave off!

This book, beginning with an Emperor's babyhood and ending with his lonely old age, so courageously and nobly endured—with, as connecting links between the

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first budding and the late autumnal tints of this grand Imperial tree, many incomplete incidents of his tragic life—is, alas, but a very inadequate sketch, and gives but a very faint conception of what this great and good man really is.

Francis-Joseph has, during the fifty-five long years of his reign, gained many titles. He has been called "The Good," "The Just," "The Chivalrous," "The Courageous," "The Noble," and I now permit myself to add to this list that of "A Keystone of Empire," which is the fittest appellation for the one whom, I repeat, is the greatest and best Sovereign Austria has ever known.

Napoleon III. said of him that he was the only monarch in Europe who, returning to his capital after defeat, disaster, and loss of territory, was welcomed by his people not only with unimpaired loyalty, but even with enhanced devotion, affection, and enthusiasm. His subjects retain to this day a fealty which no "progressive" ideas can ever wholly banish, a feeling of almost religious homage, of surpassing reverence towards their Sovereign, which has naught in common with the foolish confusion, the disordered, feverish fretting, and carping discontent of this age. Cynics might, perchance, attribute this to mere climatic influence, set it down as a result of the sense of physical well-being due to the air, pure as crystal and strong as wine, blowing from the grand Alpine barrier of ice and snow which forms on one side a rampart for those lands that collectively we are wont to call Austria; those vast stretches of flower-filled meadows where the cattle lie luxuriously, of blossoming orchards, of high grass slopes, green as emerald, and fragrant pine-woods; those broad plains of the North, glittering white and frozen half the year, and those shining, sunlit landscapes of the southern provinces that throughout the dreariest months are rich and red with roses, golden and purple

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with fruit, and rendered stately by tall palms, through whose slender stems is caught the soft sparkle of the deep-blue sea. 10

Be this as it may, the serious, sweet luminance with which, as with a halo, the love of his subjects surrounds the Emperor is a beautiful and a gracious thing to behold. So let me also repeat here in conclusion, and from the deepest depth of my heart, the first line of the great hymn which greets him wherever he appears, whether at home or abroad, in moments of sadness or of joy, of hope or of despair—

“Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser!”

THE END

Colman



















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